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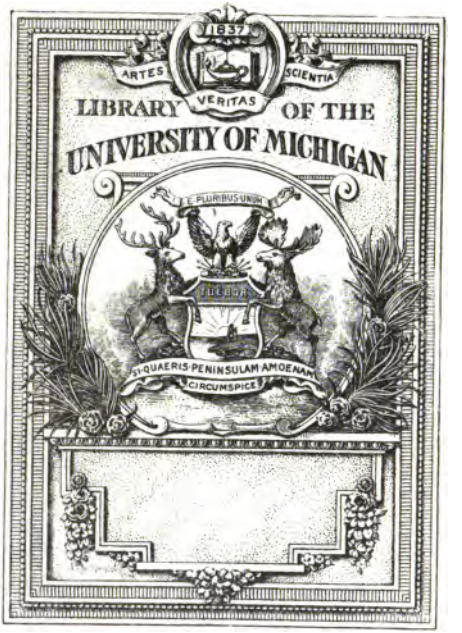
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THE

WORKS

OF

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THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,

Late Rector of the United Parishes of St. Mary, Woolnoth, and St. Mary, Woolchurch Haw, London.

A New Edition.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

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1821.

MESSIAH.

HIS

CHARACTER, ADVENT,

AND

HUMILIATION.

VOL. I.

Unum pro multis dabitur caput.

VIRG.

For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again.

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

ST MARY WOOLNOTH,

AND

ST MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,

LONDON;

THESE SERMONS

ON THE

MESSIAH,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE

AUTHOR:

TO REMAIN, AS A TESTIMONY

OF HIS RESPECT FOR THEIR PERSONS,

AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,

WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION TO THEM,

AS THEIR MINISTER,

SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons, as to the ſubſtance, (for moſt of them are conſiderably abridged), were preached to a public and numerous aſſembly. And therefore an accurate and logical diſcuſſion of the ſeveral ſubjects was not aimed at. They are rather popular diſcourſes, in which the Author, though he wiſhed not to treat the politer part of his auditory with diſreſpect, thought it likewiſe his duty ſo to adapt his manner to the occaſion, as to be intelligible to perſons of weak capacities, and in the lower ranks of life. He conceives himſelf to be a debtor to every claſs of his hearers, and that he ought to endeavour to pleaſe all men, with a view to their edification; but, farther than this, not to be greatly affected, either by their approbation or by their cenſure.

Many of the ſubjects are ſo nearly coincident, that repetitions could not be always avoided, without the appearance of affectation. Beſides, as it may be expected, that in a large congregation there are always ſome perſons preſent for the firſt time; with reſpect to theſe, an obſervation may be new, *though, perhaps, the more ſtated hearers may recollect its having been mentioned before. For a ſimilar reaſon, ſuch repetitions are*

not improper in print. Many perſons read part of a book, who may not have opportunity or inclination to read the whole. Should any one, by opening theſe Sermons at a venture, meet with a paſſage which, by a divine bleſſing, may either awaken a careleſs, or heal a wounded ſpirit, that paſſage will be exactly in the right page, even though the purport of it ſhould be expreſſed in ſeveral other places. Farther, ſince we do not always ſo much ſtand in need of new information, as to have what we already know more effectually impreſſed upon the mind; there are truths which can ſcarcely be inculcated too often, at leaſt until the deſign for which they were mentioned once be effectually anſwered. Thus, when the ſtrokes of a hammer are often repeated, not one of them can be deemed ſuperfluous; the laſt, which drives the nail to the head, being no leſs neceſſary than any of thoſe which preceded it.

From thoſe Readers, whoſe habits of thinking on religious ſubjects are formed by a cloſe attachment to particular ſyſtems of divinity, the Author requeſts a candid conſtruction of what he advances, if he ventures in ſome inſtances to deviate a little from the more beaten track. If he is ſometimes conſtrained to differ from the judgment of wiſe and good men, who have deſerved well of the church of God, he would do it with modeſty. Far from depreciating their labours, he would be thankful for the benefit which he hopes he has received from them. It is a great ſatisfaction to him, that in all doctrinal points of primary importance, his views are confirmed by the ſuffrage of writers and miniſters eminent for genuine piety and ſound learning; who aſſiſted him in his early enquiries after truth, and at whoſe feet he is ſtill willing to ſit. Yet, remembering that he is authoriſed and commanded to call no man Maſter, *ſo as to yield an implicit and unqualified ſubmiſſion to human teachers; while he gladly borrows every help he can from others, he ventures likewiſe to think for himſelf. His leading ſentiments concerning the grand peculiarities of the goſpel were formed many years ſince, when he was in a ſtate of almoſt entire ſeclusion from ſociety; when he had ſcarcely any religious book but the Bible within his reach; and had no knowledge, either of the various names, parties, and opinions, by which Chriſtians were diſtinguiſhed and divided, or of the*

controverſies

controverſies which ſubſiſted among them. He is not conſcious that any very material difference has taken place in his ſentiments ſince he firſt became acquainted with the religious world; but, after a long courſe of experience and obſervation, he ſeems to poſſeſs them in a different manner. The difficulties which for a ſeaſon perplexed him on ſome points, are either removed, or conſiderably abated. On the other hand, he now perceives difficulties that conſtrain him to lay his hand upon his mouth, in ſubjects which once appeared to him obvious and plain. Thus, if he miſtakes not himſelf, he is leſs troubled with ſcepticiſm, and at the ſame time leſs diſpoſed to be dogmatical than he formerly was. He feels himſelf unable to draw the line, with preciſion, between thoſe eſſential points which ought to be earneſtly contended for, (in a ſpirit of meekneſs), as for the faith once delivered to the ſaints; and certain ſecondary poſitions, concerning which good men may ſafely differ, and wherein, perhaps, we cannot reaſonably expect them to be unanimous during the preſent ſtate of imperfection. But if the exact boundary cannot be marked with certainty, he thinks it both deſirable and poſſible, to avoid the extremes into which men of warm tempers have often been led.

Not that the Author can be an advocate for that indifference to truth, which, under the ſpecious ſemblance of moderation *and* candour, *offers a comprehenſion, from which none are excluded, but thoſe who profeſs and aim to worſhip God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and to renounce all confidence in the fleſh.* Moderation *is a Chriſtian grace; it differs much from that tame unfeeling neutrality between truth and error, which is ſo prevalent in the preſent day. As the different rays of light, which, when ſeparated by a priſm, exhibit the various colours of the rainbow, form, in their combination, a perfect and reſplendent* white, *in which every colour is incorporated; ſo, if the graces of the Holy Spirit were complete in us, the reſult of their combined effect would be a truly candid, moderate, and liberal ſpirit towards our brethren. The Chriſtian, eſpecially he who is advanced and eſtabliſhed in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his goſpel. The honeſt warmth which he feels, when ſuch a law is broken, ſuch a*

goſpel is deſpiſed, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occaſion of his infirmities, often degenerate into anger or contempt towards thoſe who oppoſe themſelves, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence and humility; it is ſoftened by a conſciouſneſs of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited in itſelf, and very faint in its efficacy: that his attainments are weak and few, compared with his deficiencies; that his gratitude is very diſproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unſpeakably ſhort of conformity to his preſcribed rule; that he has nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing, but what, in a greater or leſs degree, he has miſapplied and miſimproved. He is therefore a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives upon his multiplied forgiveneſs. And he makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himſelf a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures. He cannot boaſt, nor is he forward to cenſure. He conſiders himſelf, leſt he alſo be tempted ; and thus he learns tenderneſs and compaſſion to others, and to bear patiently with thoſe miſtakes, prejudices, and prepoſſeſſions* in them, *which once belonged to his own character; and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed. But then, the ſame conſiderations which inſpire him with meekneſs and gentleneſs towards thoſe who oppoſe the truth, ſtrengthen his regard for the* truth *itſelf, and his conviction of its importance. For the ſake of peace, which he loves and cultivates, he accommodates himſelf, as far as he lawfully can, to the weakneſs and miſapprehenſions of thoſe who mean well; though he is thereby expoſed to the cenſure of bigots of all parties, who deem him flexible and wavering, like a reed ſhaken with the wind. But there are other points nearly connected with the honour of God, and eſſential to the life of faith, which are the foundations of his hope, and the ſources of his joy. For his firm attachment to theſe, he is content to be treated as a bigot himſelf. For here he is immoveable as an iron pillar; nor can either the fear or the favour of man prevail on him to give place, no not for an hour†. Here his judgment is fixed; and he expreſſes it in ſimple and unequivocal language, ſo as not to leave either friends or enemies in ſuſpenſe concerning*

* Gal. vi. 1. † Gal. ii. 5.

concerning the ſide which he has choſen, or the cauſe which is neareſt to his heart.

The miniſter who poſſeſſes a candour thus enlightened and thus qualified, will neither degrade himſelf to be the inſtrument, *nor aſpire to be the* head, *of a party. He will not ſervilely tread in the paths preſcribed him by men, however reſpectable. He will not multiply contentions, in defence, either of the* ſhibboleths *of others, or of any* noſtrum *of his own, under a pretence that he is pleading for the cauſe of God and truth. His attention will not be reſtrained to the credit or intereſt of any detached denomination of Chriſtians, but extended to all who love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. On the other hand, knowing that the goſpel is the wiſdom and power of God, and the only poſſible mean by which fallen man can obtain either peace or rectitude, he moſt cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being aſhamed of it, he eſteems it his glory. He preaches Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and him crucified. He dares not ſophiſticate *, diſguiſe, or ſoften the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taſte of the times. He diſdains the thought. And he will no more encounter the prejudices and corrupt maxims and practices of the world with any weapon but* the truth as it is in Jeſus †, *than he would venture to fight an enraged enemy with a wooden ſword.*

Such is the diſpoſition which the Author wiſhes for himſelf, and which he would endeavour to cultivate in others. He hopes that nothing of a contrary tendency will be found in the volumes now preſented to the Public. MESSIAH, *the great ſubject of the Oratorio, is the leading and principal ſubject of every ſermon. His perſon, grace, and glory; his matchleſs love to ſinners; his humiliation, ſufferings, and death; his ability and willingneſs to ſave to the uttermoſt; his kingdom, and the preſent and future happineſs of his willing people, are ſeverally conſidered, according to the order ſuggeſted by the ſeries of texts. Nearly connected with theſe topics are the doctrines of the fall, and depravity of man, the agency of the*

* 2 Cor. iv. 2. † Eph iv. 21.

Holy Spirit, and the nature and neceſſity of regeneration, and of that holineſs without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord. On theſe ſubjects the Author is not afraid of contradiction from thoſe who are taught of God.

With reſpect to ſome other points which incidentally occur, he has endeavoured ſo to treat them as to avoid adminiſtering fuel to the flame of angry controverſy. He is perſuaded himſelf, and ſhall be happy to perſuade his Readers, that the remaining differences of opinion among thoſe who truly underſtand and cordially believe the declarations of ſcripture on the preceding articles, are neither ſo wide nor ſo important as they have been ſometimes repreſented. Many of theſe differences are nearly verbal, and would ceaſe, if due allowance was made for the imperfection of human language, and the effects of an accuſtomed phraſeology, which often lead people to affix different ideas to the ſame expreſſions, or to expreſs the ſame ideas in different words. And if, in ſome things, we cannot exactly agree, ſince we confeſs that we are all weak and fallible, mutual patience and forbearance would be equally becoming the acknowledgments we make and the goſpel which we profeſs. We ſhould thereby act in character, as the followers of him who was compaſſionate to the infirmities and miſtakes of his diſciples, and taught them not every thing at once, but gradually, as they were able to bear.

The Author ought not to be very ſolicitous upon his own account, what reception his performance may meet with. The faſhion of this world is paſſing away. The voice, both of applauſe and of cenſure, will ſoon be ſtifled in the duſt. It is therefore but a ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment. But conſcious of the vaſt importance of the ſubject which he thus puts into the Reader's hands, he cannot take leave of him without earneſtly entreating his ſerious attention. The one principle which he aſſumes for granted, and which he is certain cannot be diſproved, is, That the* Bible *is* a revelation from God. *By this ſtandard he is willing that whatever he has advanced may be tried. If the Bible be true, we muſt all give an account, each one of himſelf, to the great and final Judge. That*

when

* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

when we ſhall appear before his awful tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, accepted in the Beloved, is the Author's fervent prayer, both for his Readers and for himſelf.

LONDON,
25th April 1736.

CON-

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Iſaiah xl. 1, 2.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her iniquity is pardoned: for ſhe hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins. Page 1

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Iſaiah xl. 3,—5.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtraight in the deſert a high-way for our God. Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low, and the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it. 15

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SER-

SERMON I.

The Conſolation.

ISAIAH xl. 1, 2.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her iniquity is pardoned: for ſhe hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins.

THE particulars of the great myſtery of godlineſs, as enumerated by the Apoſtle Paul, conſtitute the grand and inexhauſtible theme of the Goſpel Miniſtry, "*God manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the Spirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory**." It is my wiſh and purpoſe to know nothing among you but this ſubject; to preach nothing to you but what has a real connection with the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified, and with the cauſes and effects of his obedience unto death, even the death of the croſs. But a regard to the ſatisfaction and advantage of my ſtated hearers, has often made me deſirous of adopting ſome plan, which might lead me to exhibit the principal outlines of the Saviour's character and mediation in a regular ſeries of diſcourſes; ſo as to form, if not a picture, at leaſt a ſlight ſketch, of thoſe features of his glory and of his grace which endear him to the hearts of his people. Such a plan has lately, and rather unexpectedly, occurred to me. Converſation in almoſt every company, for ſome time paſt, has much

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

turned upon the commemoration of Handel; the grand muſical entertainments, and particularly his Oratorio of the *Meſſiah*, which have been repeatedly performed on that occaſion in Weſtminſter Abbey. If it could be reaſonably hoped that the performers and the company aſſembled to hear the muſic, or the greater part, or even a very conſiderable part of them, were capable of entering into the ſpirit of the ſubject; I will readily allow that the *Meſſiah*, executed in ſo maſterly a manner, by perſons whoſe hearts, as well as their voices and inſtruments, were tuned to the Redeemer's praiſe; accompanied with the grateful emotions of an audience duly affected with a ſenſe of their obligations to his love; might afford one of the higheſt and nobleſt gratifications of which we are capable in the preſent life. But they who love the Redeemer, and therefore delight to join in his praiſe, if they did not find it convenient, or think it expedient, to hear the *Meſſiah* at Weſtminſter, may comfort themſelves with the thought, that, in a little time, they ſhall be ſtill more abundantly gratified. Ere long, death ſhall rend the vail which hides eternal things from their view, and introduce them to that unceaſing ſong and univerſal chorus, which are even now performing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Till then, I apprehend, that true Chriſtians, without the aſſiſtance of either vocal or inſtrumental muſic, may find greater pleaſure in a humble contemplation on the *words* of the *Meſſiah*, than they can derive from the utmoſt efforts of muſical genius. This therefore is the plan I ſpoke of. I mean to lead your meditations to the language of the Oratorio, and to conſider in their order (if the Lord, on whom our breath depends, ſhall be pleaſed to afford life, ability, and opportunity) the ſeveral ſublime and intereſting paſſages of Scripture which are the baſis of that admired compoſition.

If

If he ſhall condeſcend to ſmile upon the attempt, pleaſure and profit will go hand in hand. There is no *harmony* to a heaven-born ſoul like that which is the reſult of the combination and coincidence of all the Divine Attributes and Perfections, manifeſted in the work of redemption; mercy and truth meeting together, inflexible righteouſneſs correſponding with the peace of offenders, God glorious, and ſinners ſaved. There is no *melody* upon earth to be compared with the voice of the blood of Jeſus ſpeaking peace to a guilty conſcience, or with the voice of the Holy Spirit applying the promiſes to the heart, and ſweetly inſpiring a temper of confidence and adoption. Theſe are joys which the world can neither give nor take away, which never pall upon the mind by continuance or repetition; the ſenſe of them is always *new*, the recollection of them is always pleaſant. Nor do they only ſatisfy, but ſanctify the ſoul. They ſtrengthen faith, animate hope, add fervency to love, and both diſpoſe and enable the Chriſtian to run in all the paths of holy obedience with an enlarged heart.

The *Meſſiah* of Handel conſiſts of three parts. The firſt contains prophecies of his advent and the happy conſequences, together with the angel's meſſage to the ſhepherds informing them of his birth, as related by St Luke. The ſecond part deſcribes his paſſion, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion; his taking poſſeſſion of his kingdom of glory, the commencement of his kingdom of grace upon the earth, and the certain diſappointment and ruin of all who perſiſt in oppoſition to his will. The third part expreſſes the bleſſed fruits and conſummation of his undertaking, in the deliverance of his people from ſin, ſorrow, and death, and in making them finally victorious over all their enemies. The triumphant ſong of the redeemed, to the praiſe of the Lamb, who bought them with his own blood, cloſes the

whole. The arrangement or ſeries of theſe paſſages is ſo judiciouſly diſpoſed, ſo well connected, and ſo fully comprehends all the principal truths of the Goſpel, that I ſhall not attempt either to alter or to enlarge it. The exordium or introduction, which I have read to you from the propheſy of Iſaiah, is very happily choſen.

If, as ſome eminent commentators ſuppoſe, the prophet had any reference, in this paſſage, to the return of Iſrael from Babylon into their own land, his principal object was undoubtedly of much greater importance. Indeed their deliverance from captivity, and their ſtate afterwards as a nation, do not appear to correſpond with the magnificent images employed in the following verſes. For though they rebuilt their city and temple, they met with many inſults and much oppoſition, and continued to be a tributary and dependent people. I ſhall therefore wave the conſideration of this ſenſe.

The eye of the prophet's mind ſeems to be chiefly fixed upon one auguſt Perſonage, who was approaching to enlighten and bleſs a miſerable world; and before he deſcribes the circumſtances of his appearance, he is directed to comfort the mourners in Zion, with an aſſurance, that this great event would fully compenſate them for all their ſorrows. The ſtate of Jeruſalem, the repreſentative name of the people of God, was very low in Iſaiah's time. The people, who in the days of Solomon were attached to the ſervice of God, honoured with ſignal tokens of his preſence and favour, and raiſed to the higheſt pitch of temporal proſperity, were now degenerated, the gold was become dim, and the fine gold changed. Iniquity abounded, judgments were impending, yet inſenſibility and ſecurity prevailed, and the words of many were ſtout againſt the Lord. But there were a few who feared the Lord, whoſe eyes affected their hearts, and who mourned for the evils

evils which they could not prevent. Theſe, and theſe only, were, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, the people of the Lord, and to theſe the meſſage of comfort is addreſſed. Speak to Jeruſalem comfortably, ſpeak *to her heart*, (as the Hebrew word is), to her very caſe, and tell her that there is a balm for all her wounds, a cordial for all her griefs, in this one conſideration, MESSIAH is at hand. In the prophetic ſtyle things future are deſcribed as preſent, and that which the mouth of the Lord has ſpoken of as ſure to take place, is conſidered as already done. Thus the prophet, rapt into future times, contemplates the manifeſtation of MESSIAH, the accompliſhment of his great undertaking, and all the happy conſequences of his obedience unto death for men, as though he ſtood upon the ſpot, and with John, the harbinger of our Lord, (whoſe appearance he immediately deſcribes), was pointing with his finger to the Lamb of God that taketh away the ſin of the world.

This comfortable meſſage conſiſts of two parts. Firſt, the removal of evil; her warfare is accompliſhed, her iniquity is pardoned. Secondly, A promiſe of good more than equivalent to all her afflictions; ſhe hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins.

I. Two ideas are included in the original term, tranſlated warfare.

1. A ſtate of ſervice connected with hardſhip, like that of the military life *.

2. An appointed time, as it is rendered in Job †.

Theſe ideas equally apply to the Moſaic diſpenſation. The ſpirit of that inſtitution was comparatively a ſpirit of bondage, diſtance, and fear; and the ſtate of the church while under the law, is reſembled by the Apoſtle to that of a minor, who, though he be an heir, is under tutors and governors,

* Numb. i. 3. † Job vii. 1. and xiv. 14.

and differeth but little from a ſervant, until the time appointed of the Father *. The ceremonial law, with reſpect to its inefficacy, is ſtyled *weak*, and with reſpect to the long train of its multiplied, expenſive, difficult, and repeated appointments, a *yoke and burden.* But it was only for a preſcribed time. The Goſpel was deſigned to ſuperſede it, and to introdute a ſtate of life, power, liberty, and confidence. The blackneſs and darkneſs, the fire and tempeſt, and other circumſtances of terror attendant on the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai †, which not only ſtruck the people with diſmay, but cauſed even Moſes himſelf to ſay, I exceedingly fear and quake, were expreſſive of its deſign; which was not to lead the people of Iſrael to expect peace and hope from their beſt obedience to that covenant, but rather to convince them of the neceſſity of a better covenant eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes, and to direct their hopes to MESSIAH, who was prefigured by all their ſacrifices, and who in the fulneſs of time was to make a complete atonement for ſin, by the ſacrifice of himſelf. Then their legal figurative conſtitution would ceaſe, the ſhadows give place to the ſubſtance, and the true worſhippers of God would be inſtructed, enabled, and encouraged to worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth; no more as ſervants, but in the temper of adoption, as the children of God by faith in the Son of his love.

There is a conſiderable analogy to this difference between the Law and the Goſpel, as contradiſtinguiſhed from each other, in the previous diſtreſs of a ſinner, when he is made ſenſible of his guilt and danger as a tranſgreſſor of the law of God, and the ſubſequent peace which he obtains by believing the Goſpel. The good ſeed of the word of grace can only take root and flouriſh in a ſoil duly prepared. And this preparation of the heart ‡, without which all

* Gal. iv. 1.—4. † Heb. xii. 18.—22. ‡ Prov. xvi. 1.

all that is read or heard concerning MESSIAH produces no permanent good effect, is wholly from the Lord. The firſt good work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of fallen man, is to convince of ſin*. He gives ſome due impreſſions of the majeſty and holineſs of the God with whom we have to do, of our dependence upon him, of our obligations to him as our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor; then we begin to form our eſtimate of duty, of ſin, and its deſert, not from the prevalent maxims and judgments of mankind around us, but from the unerring ſtandard of Scripture. Thence new and painful apprehenſions ariſe—the lofty looks of man are humbled, his haughtineſs is brought low, his mouth ſtopped, or only opened to confeſs his guilt and vileneſs, and to cry for mercy. He now feels himſelf under the law; it condemns him, and he cannot reply; it commands him, and he cannot obey. He has neither righteouſneſs nor ſtrength, and muſt ſink into deſpair, were it not that he is now qualified to hearken to the Goſpel with other ears, and to read the Scriptures with other eyes, (if I may ſo ſpeak), than he once did. He now knows he is ſick, and therefore knows his need of a phyſician. This ſtate of anxiety, conflict, and fear, which keeps comfort from his heart, and perhaps ſlumber from his eyes, is often of long continuance. There is no common ſtandard whereby to determine either the degree or the duration. Both differ in different perſons; and as the body and the mind have a ſtrong and reciprocal influence upon each other, it is probable the difference obſervable in ſuch caſes may in part depend upon conſtitutional cauſes. However, the time is a preſcribed time, and though not ſubject to any rules or reaſonings of ours, is limited and regulated by the wiſdom of God. He wounds, and he heals, in his own appointed moment. None that continue

* John xvi. 9.

waiting upon him, and ſeeking ſalvation in the means which he has directed, ſhall be finally diſappointed. Sooner or later he gives them, according to his promiſe, beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs*. This warfare is accompliſhed, when they rightly underſtand and cordially believe the following clauſe.

Her iniquity is pardoned. Though the ſacrifices under the law had an immediate and direct effect to reſtore the offender for whom they were offered, to the privileges pertaining to the people of Iſrael conſidered as a nation or commonwealth, they could not of themſelves cleanſe the conſcience from guilt. It is a dictate of right reaſon, no leſs than of revelation, that it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſin †. For this purpoſe the blood of Chriſt had a retroſpective efficacy, and was the only ground of conſolation for a convinced ſinner from the beginning of the world. He was propoſed to our firſt parents as the ſeed of the woman who ſhould break the ſerpent's head ‡. In this ſeed Abraham believed and was juſtified, and all of every age who were juſtified were partakers of Abraham's faith. Therefore the Apoſtle teaches us, that when God ſet him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, he declared his righteouſneſs in the remiſſion of ſins that were paſt ‖. For tho' we may ſuppoſe God would have declared his *mercy* in forgiving ſin upon any terms, no conſideration but the death of his Son could have exhibited his *righteouſneſs*,—that is, his holineſs, juſtice, and truth, in the pardon of ſin. True penitents and believers were pardoned and ſaved *under* the law, but not *by* the law. Their faith looked through all the legal inſtitutions to him who was repreſented and typified by them.

* Iſai. lxi. 3. † Heb. x. 4. ‡ Gen. iii. 15. ‖ Rom. iii. 25.

them. But the types which revealed him, in a ſenſe concealed him likewiſe. So that though Abraham ſaw his day, and rejoiced, and a ſucceſſion of the ſervants of God foreſaw his glory and his ſufferings, and ſpake of him; yet in general the Church of the Old Teſtament rather deſired and longed for, than actually poſſeſſed, that fulneſs of light and knowledge concerning the perſon, offices, love, and victory of MESSIAH, which is the privilege of thoſe who enjoy and believe the Goſpel*. Yet great diſcoveries of theſe things were vouchſafed to ſome of the prophets, particularly to Iſaiah, who, on account of the clearneſs of his views of the Redeemer and his kingdom, has been ſometimes ſtyled a fifth Evangeliſt. The moſt evangelical part of his prophecy, or at leaſt that part in which he proſecutes the ſubject with the leaſt interruption, begins with this chapter and with this verſe. And he propoſes it for the comfort of the mourners in Zion in his day. *We* know that the Son of God, of whom Moſes and the prophets ſpake, is actually come †; that the atonement for ſin is made, the ranſom for ſinners paid and accepted. Now the ſhadows are paſt, the vail removed, the night is ended, the dawn, the day, is arriſen, yea the Sun of Righteouſneſs is ariſen, with healing in his beams ‡. God is reconciled in his Son, and the miniſters of the Goſpel are now authoriſed to preach comfort to all who mourn under a ſenſe of ſin, to tell them, all manner of ſin is forgiven for the Redeemer's ſake, and that the iniquity of thoſe who believe in him is freely and abundantly pardoned.

II. Though the laſt clauſe of the verſe does not belong to the paſſage, as ſelected for the Oratorio, it is ſo cloſely connected with the ſubject, that I am not willing to omit it. *She has received at the*

* Heb. xi. 39, 40. † 1 John v. 20. ‡ Mal. iv. 2.

Lord's hand double for all her ſins. The meaning here cannot be, that her afflictions had already been more, and greater, than her ſins had deſerved. The juſt deſert of ſin cannot be received in the preſent life, for the wages of ſin is death and the curſe of the law, or, in the Apoſtle's words, everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and the glory of his power *. Therefore a living man can have no reaſon to complain under the heavieſt ſufferings. If we acknowledge ourſelves to be ſinners, we have likewiſe cauſe to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities. Nor can the words be ſo applied to MESSIAH, as to intimate, that even his ſufferings were more than neceſſary, or greater than the exigence of the caſe required. The efficacy of his atonement is indeed greater than the actual application, and ſufficient to ſave the whole race of mankind if they truly believed in the Son of God. We read, that he groaned and bled upon the croſs, till he could ſay, It is finiſhed, but no longer. It becomes us to refer to infinite wiſdom the reaſons why his ſufferings were prolonged for ſuch a preciſe time; but I think we may take it for granted, that they did not endure an hour or a minute longer than was ſtrictly neceſſary. The expreſſion ſeems to be elliptical, and I apprehend the true ſenſe is, that Jeruſalem ſhould receive *bleſſings*, double, much greater than all the afflictions which ſin had brought upon her; and in general to us, to every believing ſinner, that the bleſſings of the Goſpel are an unſpeakably great compenſation, and over-balance, for all afflictions of every kind with which we have been, or can be exerciſed. Afflictions are the fruit of ſin, and becauſe our ſins have been many, our afflictions may be many. *But where ſin* has *abounded, grace has much more abounded* †.

Before

* 2 Theſſ. i. 9. † Rom. v. 20.

Before our Lord healed the paralytic man who was brought to him, he ſaid, *Be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee**. His outward malady rendered him an object of compaſſion to thoſe who brought him; but he appears to have been ſenſible of an inward malady, which only Jeſus could diſcern, or pity, or relieve. I doubt not but his conſcience was burdened with guilt. An aſſurance therefore that his ſins were forgiven, was ſufficient to make him be of good cheer, whether his palſy were removed or not. To this purpoſe the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks abſolutely and without exception. *Bleſſed is the man, however circumſtanced, whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe iniquity is covered* †. Though he be poor, afflicted, diſeaſed, neglected or deſpiſed, if the Lord imputeth not his iniquity to him, he is a bleſſed man. There is no ſituation in human life ſo deplorable, but a ſenſe of the pardoning love of God can ſupport and comfort the ſufferer under it, compoſe his ſpirit, yea, make him exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations. For he who feels the power of the blood of Jeſus cleanſing his conſcience from guilt, and giving him acceſs by faith to the throne of grace, with liberty to ſay Abba, Father; he knows that all his trials are under the direction of wiſdom and love, are all working together for his good, and that the heavieſt of them are light, and the longeſt momentary, in compariſon of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is reſerved for him in a better world ‡. Even at preſent in the midſt of his ſufferings, having communion with God, and a gracious ſubmiſſion to his will, he poſſeſſes a peace that paſſeth underſtanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I ſhall cloſe this preliminary diſcourſe with a few obſervations, by way of improvement.

* Mark ii. 5. † Pſal. xxxii. 1. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.

1. How juſtly may we adopt the Prophet's words, *Who is a God like unto thee* *! Behold and admire his goodneſs! Infinitely happy and glorious in himſelf, he has provided for the comfort of thoſe who were rebels againſt his government, and tranſgreſſors of his holy law. What was degenerate Iſrael, and what are we, that he ſhould thus prevent us with his mercy, remember us in our low eſtate, and redeem us from miſery, in ſuch a way, and at ſuch a price! Salvation is wholly of *grace* †; not only undeſerved, but undeſired by us, till he is pleaſed to awaken us to a ſenſe of our need of it. And then we find every thing prepared that our wants require, or our wiſhes can conceive; yea, that he has done exceedingly beyond what we could either aſk or think. Salvation is wholly of the *Lord* ‡, and bears thoſe ſignatures of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, which diſtinguiſh all his works from the puny imitations of men. It is every way worthy of himſelf, a great, a free, a full, a ſure ſalvation. It is great, whether we conſider the objects, miſerable and hell-deſerving ſinners; the end, the reſtoration of ſuch alienated creatures to his image and favour, to immortal life and happineſs; or the means, the incarnation, humiliation, ſufferings and death of his beloved Son. It is free, without exception of perſons or caſes, without any conditions or qualifications, but ſuch as he himſelf performs in them, and beſtows upon them. It is full, including every deſirable bleſſing; pardon, peace, adoption, protection and guidance through this world, and in the world to come eternal life and happineſs, in the unclouded uninterrupted enjoyment of the favour and love of God, with the perfect and perpetual excluſion of every evil.

2. When the Lord God, who knows the human heart, would ſpeak comfort to it, he propoſes one object,

* Micah vii. 18. † Epheſ. ii. 5. ‡ Pſal. iii. 8.

object, and only one, as the neceſſary and all-ſufficient ſource of conſolation. This is MESSIAH. Jeſus in his perſon and offices, known and received by faith, affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. If we admit that they who live in the ſpirit of the world, can make a poor ſhift to amuſe themſelves, and be tolerably ſatisfied in a ſtate of proſperity, while every thing goes on according to their wiſh; while we make this conceſſion, (which however is more than we need allow them, for we know that no ſtate of life is free from anxiety, diſappointment, wearineſs, and diſguſt); yet we muſt conſider them as objects of compaſſion. It is a proof of the weakneſs and diſorder of their minds, that they are capable of being ſatisfied with ſuch trifles. Thus if a lunatic conceives his cell to be a palace, that his chains are ornaments of gold, if he calls a wreath of his ſtraw a crown, puts it on his head, and affects the language of majeſty—we do not ſuppoſe the poor creature to be happy, becauſe he tells us that he is ſo; but we rather conſider his complacence in his ſituation, as an effect and proof of his malady. We pity him, and, if we were able, would gladly reſtore him to his ſenſes, though we know a cure would immediately put an end to his pleaſing deluſions. But, I ſay, ſuppoſing or admitting the world could make its votaries happy in a ſtate of proſperity, it will, it muſt, leave them without reſource in the day of trouble. And they are to be pitied indeed, who, when their gourds are withered, when the deſire of their eyes is taken from them with a ſtroke, or the evil which they moſt feared touches them, or when death looks them cloſely in the face, have no acquaintance with God, no acceſs to the throne of grace, but being without Chriſt, are without a ſolid hope of good hereafter, though they are forced to feel the vanity and inconſtancy of every thing here. But they who know MESSIAH, who believe in him,

and

and partake of his ſpirit, cannot be comfortleſs. They recollect what *he* ſuffered for them, they know that every circumſtance and event of life is under his direction, and deſigned to work for their good; that though they ſow in tears, they ſhall ſoon reap in joy; and therefore they poſſeſs their ſouls in patience, and are cheerful, yea comfortable, under thoſe trying diſpenſations of Providence, which when they affect the lovers of pleaſure, too often either excite in them a ſpirit of preſumptuous murmuring againſt the will of God; or ſink them into deſpondency, and all the melancholy train of evils attendant on thoſe who languiſh and pine away under that depreſſion of ſpirits, emphatically ſtyled a broken heart.

3. To be capable of the comfort my text propoſes, the mind muſt be in a ſuitable diſpoſition. A free pardon is a comfort to a malefactor, but it implies guilt; and therefore they who have no apprehenſion that they have broken the laws, would be rather offended than comforted, by an offer of pardon. This is one principal cauſe of that neglect, yea contempt, which the goſpel of the grace of God meets with from the world. If we could ſuppoſe that a company of people who were all trembling under an apprehenſion of his diſpleaſure, conſtrained to confeſs the juſtice of the ſentence, but not as yet informed of any way to eſcape, were to hear this meſſage for the firſt time, and to be fully aſſured of its truth and authority, they would receive it as life from the dead. But it is to be feared, that for want of knowing themſelves, and their real ſtate in the ſight of him with whom they have to do, many perſons, who have received pleaſure from the muſic of the *Meſſiah*, have neither found, nor expected, nor deſired to find, any comfort from the words.

SER.

SERMON II.

The Harbinger.

ISAIAH, xl. 3.—5.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtraight in the deſert a high-way for our God. Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low; and the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

THE general ſtyle of the prophecies is poetical. The inimitable ſimplicity which characterizes every part of divine Revelation, is diverſified according to the nature of the ſubject; and the magnificence and variety of imagery which conſtitute the life and ſpirit of poetry, evidently diſtinguiſh the ſtyle of the Pſalms, of Iſaiah, and the other poetical books, from that of the hiſtorical, even in the common verſions. The various rules and properties of Hebrew poetry are not, at this diſtance of time, certainly known. But the preſent Biſhop of London, in his elegant and inſtructive lectures on the ſubject, and in the diſcourſe prefixed to his tranſlation of Iſaiah, has fully demonſtrated one property. It uſually conſiſts either of parallel, or contraſted ſentences. The parallel expreſſions (excepting in the book of Proverbs) are moſt prevalent. In theſe the ſame thought, for ſubſtance, expreſſed in the firſt member, is repeated, with ſome difference of phraſe, in the following; which, if it enlarges or confirms the import of what went before, ſeldom varies the idea. Almoſt any paſſage I firſt caſt my eye upon, will

will ſufficiently explain my meaning. For inſtance, in the lixth chapter of Iſaiah.

Ver. 1. *Behold the Lord's hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave,*
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
Ver. 9. *Therefore is judgment far from us,*
Neither doth juſtice overtake us;
We wait for light, but behold obſcurity,
For brightneſs, but we walk in darkneſs.

So in chap. lv.

Ver. 2. *Wherefore do ye ſpend money for that which is not bread;*
And your labour for that which ſatisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs.

So likewiſe in Pſalm ii.

Ver. 4. *He that ſitteth in the heavens ſhall laugh;*
The Lord ſhall have them in deriſion.
Ver. 5. *Then ſhall he ſpeak unto them in his wrath;*
And vex them in his ſore diſpleaſure.

Theſe ſpecimens may ſuffice for my preſent purpoſe. The knowledge of this peculiarity of the poetical idiom, may often ſave us the trouble of enquiring minutely into the meaning of every ſingle word, when one plain and comprehenſive ſenſe ariſes from a view of the whole paſſage taken together. This obſervation applies to the firſt of the verſes in my text. Though it be true that John the Baptiſt lived for a ſeaſon retired and unnoticed in a wilderneſs, and began to preach in the wilderneſs of Judea, the expreſſion, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs*, does not merely foretell that circumſtance. The verſe conſiſts of two parallels. The prophet, rapt into future times, hears a voice proclaiming the approach of MESSIAH, and this is the majeſtic language.

In

In the wilderneſs prepare ye the way of the Lord;
Make ſtraight in the deſert a highway for our God.

The wilderneſs and the deſert are the ſame here, as likewiſe in chap. xxxv. where the happy, the ſudden, the unexpected effects of his appearance are deſcribed.—

The wilderneſs and the ſolitary place ſhall be glad,
And the deſert ſhall rejoice, and bloſſom as the roſe.

Now to ſee, by the eye of faith, the glory of the Redeemer in his appearance; to ſee Power divine preparing the way before him; to enter into the gracious and wonderful deſign of his ſalvation; to acknowledge, admire, and adore him as the Lord, and humbly to claim him as *our* God, muſt afford a pleaſure very different from that which the moſt excellent muſic, however well adapted to the words, can poſſibly give. The latter may be reliſhed by a worldly mind; the former is appropriate, and can only be enjoyed by thoſe who are taught of God.

When the Eaſtern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before to give notice that the King was upon the road, and likewiſe proper perſons to prepare his way, and to remove obſtacles. Some of them, (if we may depend upon hiſtory), in the affectation of diſplaying their pomp and power, effected extraordinary things upon ſuch occaſions. For man, tho' vain, would appear *Wiſe*; though a ſinful worm, he would fain be accounted *Great*. We read of their having actually filled up vallies, and levelled hills, to make a commodious road, for themſelves or their armies, through places otherwiſe impaſſable. The prophet thus illuſtrates great things by ſmall, and accommodates the language and uſages of men to divine truth. MESSIAH is about to viſit a wilderneſs world, and thoſe parts of it which he bleſſes with his preſence, ſhall become the garden of the Lord. Till then it is all deſolate, rocky, and wild. But his way

way ſhall be prepared. Mountainous difficulties ſhall ſink down before him into plains. In defiance of all obſtacles, his glory ſhall be revealed in the wilderneſs, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it, for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

The leading ideas reſpecting MESSIAH's appearance, ſuggeſted by this ſublime repreſentation, are,

I. The ſtate of the world at his coming—*A wilderneſs.*

II. The preparation of his way. *Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low.*

III. The manner and effects of his manifeſtation. *And the glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it.*

I. The word *wilderneſs*, I ſuppoſe, generally excites the idea of an intricate, ſolitary, uncultivated, dangerous place. Such is the deſcription Jeremiah gives of that wilderneſs through which the Lord led Iſrael, when he had delivered them from Egypt. *A land of deſerts and of pits, a land of drought and of the ſhadow of death, a land that no man paſſeth through, and where no man dwelt* *. The world, in which we ſojourn for a ſeaſon, does not appear to us in this unpleaſing view at firſt. The ſpirit, and the things of it, are congenial to our depraved inclinations; and eſpecially in early life, our unexperienced hearts form high expectations from it; and we rather hope to find it a paradiſe than a wilderneſs. But when the convincing power of the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the underſtanding, we awake as from a dream; the enchantment by which we were deluded is broken, and we then begin to judge rightly of the world; that it is a wearieſome wilderneſs indeed, and that our only important concern with it is to get happily out of it. In a ſpiritual view, a wilderneſs is a ſignificant emblem of the ſtate of mankind, both Jews and Heathens, at that period which the

* Jer. ii. 6.

the apoſtle calls the fulneſs of time, when God ſent forth his Son *.

Iſrael, once the beloved people of God, was at that time ſo extremely degenerated, that, a few individuals excepted, the vineyard of the Lord, ſo highly cultivated, ſo ſignally protected, yielded only wild grapes †. Though they were not addicted to imitate the idolatry of the Heathens, as their forefathers had been, they were no leſs alienated from the true God; and their wickedneſs was the more aggravated, for being practiſed under a profeſſed attachment to the forms of his law. They drew nigh to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him ‡. Their very worſhip profaned the temple in which they gloried, and the holy houſe of prayer, through their abominations, was become a den of thieves. They owned the divine authority of the Scriptures, and read them with ſeeming attention, but rendered them of none effect, thro' the greater attention they paid to the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boaſted in their relation to Abraham as their father, but proved themſelves to be indeed the children of thoſe who had perſecuted and murdered the prophets ‖. The Scribes and Phariſees, who ſat in the chair of Moſes, and were the public teachers of the people, under an exterior garb of ſanctity, of prayer, and faſting, were guilty of oppreſſion, fraud, and uncleanneſs; and while they truſted in themſelves that they were righteous, and deſpiſed others, their real character was a combination of pride and hypocriſy. Therefore he who knew their hearts, and ſaw through all their diſguiſes, compared them to painted ſepulchres, fair to outward appearance, but within full of filth and impurity §. From the ſpirit of theſe blind guides, we may judge of the ſpirit of the blind people who held them.

* Gal. iv. 4. † Iſa. v. 4. ‡ Mark vii. 6.
‖ Matt. xxiii. 30, 31. § Matt. xxiii. 27.

them in admiration, and were willingly directed and led by them. Thus was the faithful city become a harlot; it was once full of judgment; righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now murderers *. Such a wilderneſs was Judea when MESSIAH condeſcended to viſit it.

Among the heathens, ignorance, idolatry, ſenſuality, and cruelty univerſally prevailed. Their pretended wiſe men had, indeed, talked of wiſdom and morality from age to age; but their ſpeculations were no more than ſwelling words of vanity, cold, trifling, uncertain, and without any valuable influence, either upon themſelves or upon others. They had philoſophers, poets, orators, muſicians, and artiſts, eminent in their way; but the nations reputed the moſt civilized were overwhelmed with abominable wickedneſs equally with the reſt. The ſhocking effect of their idolatry upon their moral principles and conduct, notwithſtanding their attainments in arts and ſcience, is deſcribed by the apoſtle in the cloſe of the firſt chapter of his epiſtle to the Romans. With great propriety therefore the ſtate of the world, both Jew and Gentile, conſidered in a moral view, is compared by the prophet to a wilderneſs—a barren and dreary waſte. The purſuits and practices of the world were diametrically oppoſite to the ſpirit and deſign of that kingdom which MESSIAH was about to ſet up; and therefore, as the event proved, directly diſpoſed to withſtand his progreſs. But,

II. Before his appearance a way was prepared for him in the wilderneſs.

The providence of God, by a gradual train of diſpenſations, diſpoſed the political ſtate of mankind in a ſubſerviency to this great event. All the commotions and revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of the earth, are ſo many detached parts of a complicated but wiſely determined plan, of which the eſtabliſh-

* Iſa. i. 21.

eſtabliſhment of MESSIAH's kingdom is the final cauſe. The kings and politicians of the world are not aware of this. God is not in their thoughts. But while they purſue their own ends, and make havock of the peace of mankind, to gratify their own intereſts and ambition, and look no higher, they are ignorantly, and without intention, acting as inſtruments of the will of God. The wrath of man is over-ruled to his praiſe and his purpoſe*, and ſucceeds ſo far as it is inſtrumental to the accompliſhment of his deſigns, and no farther. While they move in this line, their ſchemes, however injudiciouſly laid, and whatever diſproportion there may ſeem between the means they are poſſeſſed of and the vaſt objects they aim at, proſper beyond their own expectations; but the remainder of their wrath he will reſtrain. Their beſt projected and beſt ſupported enterpriſes iſſue in ſhame and diſappointment, if they are not neceſſary parts of that chain of cauſes and events which the Lord of all has appointed. Thus Sennacherib, when ſent by the God whom he knew not to execute his diſpleaſure againſt the kingdom of Judah, had, for a time, a rapid and uninterrupted ſeries of conqueſts†: but his attempt upon Jeruſalem was beyond the limits of his commiſſion, and therefore failed. Among the principal inſtruments who were appointed to prepare a way in the wilderneſs for MESSIAH, and to facilitate the future ſpread of his kingdom, we may take notice of Alexander; and this deſignation ſecured his ſucceſs, though the extravagancies, exceſſes, and raſhneſs, which marked his character, were ſufficient to have rendered his undertakings abortive, had he not been in the hand of the Lord of hoſts, as an ax or a ſaw in the hand of the workman. By his conqueſts the knowledge of the Greek language was diffuſed among many nations; and

* Pſal. lxxvi. 10. † Iſa. xxxvii. 26.—29.

and the Hebrew ſcriptures being ſoon afterwards tranſlated into that language, an expectation of ſome great deliverer was raiſed far and wide, before MESSIAH appeared. When this ſervice was fulfilled, the haughty preſumptuous worm who had been employed in it, was no longer neceſſary, and therefore was ſoon laid aſide; and all his proud deſigns, for the eſtabliſhment of his own family and dominion, periſhed with him. His empire was divided towards the four winds of heaven, and this diviſion likewiſe contributed to bring forward the purpoſe of God *. For each of the four kingdoms eſtabliſhed by his ſucceſſors being thus ſeparated, became a more eaſy prey to the Roman power. This power, which had been gradually increaſing and extending in the courſe of ſeveral hundred years, was at the height about the time of our Lord's birth. The greateſt part of the habitable earth which was at that time diſtinctly known, was united under one empire, compoſed of various kingdoms and governments, which, though once independent and conſiderable, were then no more than Roman provinces; and as all the provinces had an immediate connection with Rome, a way was thus prepared, and an intercourſe opened on every ſide, for the promulgation of the goſpel.

Among the Jews, the profeſſing people of God, a way was prepared for MESSIAH by the miniſtry of his harbinger, John the Baptiſt, who came in the ſpirit and power of Elijah, (as had been foretold of him by the prophets, particularly by the laſt of the prophets, Malachi), preaching the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins, and proclaiming that the Saviour and his kingdom were at hand. He who ſent him accompanied his miſſion with a divine power. A multitude of perſons, of various deſcriptions, were impreſſed by his meſſage, inſomuch that John himſelf

* Dan. viii. 8.

ſelf ſeems to have been aſtoniſhed at the numbers and characters of thoſe who came to his baptiſm.

When the miniſtry of John had thus previouſly diſpoſed the minds of many for the reception of MESSIAH, and engaged the attention of the people at large, MESSIAH himſelf entered upon his public office, on the ſame ſcene and among the ſame people. As he increaſed, John willingly decreaſed. So the morning ſtar ceaſes to be ſeen as the ſun advances above the horizon. This diſtinguiſhed ſervant of God having finiſhed his work, was removed to a better world. Not in the triumphant manner in which Elijah was tranſlated, but as he came to announce a new diſpenſation, under which believers were to expect oppoſition and ill treatment, to walk by faith, and frequently to be called to ſeal their teſtimony with their blood, he was permitted to fall a ſacrifice to the revenge of a wanton woman; and though we are aſſured that none of the race of Adam was greater in the eſtimation of God than he, his death was aſked and procured as the reward of an idle dance *.

III. The latter part of my text deſcribes the manner and immediate effects of MESSIAH's appearance during his perſonal miniſtry, with an intimation of its future and more extenſive conſequences.

The vallies ſhall be exalted. A valley is an emblem of a low condition. Such was the condition of moſt of our Lord's followers; but his notice and favour exalted them highly. He came to preach the goſpel to the poor, to fill the hungry with good things, to ſave the chief of ſinners, to open a door of hope and ſalvation to perſons of the vileſt and moſt deſpicable characters in human eſtimation. Such, for inſtance, was the woman mentioned by the evangeliſt Luke †. The Phariſee thought our Lord diſhonoured himſelf by permitting ſuch a one to touch him, nor

* Matt xi. 11. xiv. 8.—11. † Luke vii. 37, 38.

nor had ſhe a word to ſay in her own behalf. But the compaſſionate Saviour highly exalted her, when he vouchſafed to plead her cauſe, to expreſs his gracious acceptance of her tears and love, and to aſſure her that her ſins, though many, were all forgiven. Very low likewiſe was the ſtate of the malefactor on the croſs; he had committed great crimes, was ſuffering grievous torments, and in the very jaws of death*. But grace viſited his heart, he was plucked as a brand out of the fire, and exalted to paradiſe and glory. The world accounts the proud happy, and honours the covetous if they be proſperous. But true honour cometh from God. They who are partakers of the faith and hope of the goſpel, and have intereſt in the precious promiſes, are indeed the rich, the happy, the excellent of the earth, however they may be unnoticed or deſpiſed by their fellow-creatures. The honour of places likewiſe is to be conſidered in this light. Bethlehem, though but of little note among the thouſands of Judah, was rendered more illuſtrious by the birth of MESSIAH, than Babylon or Rome. The Galileans were held in contempt by the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, as a mean and provincial people; but the places in Galilee, which our Lord frequently viſited, or where he ſometimes reſided, are ſpoken of as exalted unto heaven, by the honour and privilege of his preſence, though ſome of them were no more than fiſhing towns. And ſo at this day, if we have ſpiritual diſcernment, we ſhall judge, that a little village, where the goſpel is known, prized, and adorned by a ſuitable converſation, has a dignity and importance far preferable to all the parade of a wealthy metropolis, if deſtitute of the like privileges.

On the contrary, *Every mountain and hill ſhall be brought low.* MESSIAH came to pour contempt on all

* Luke xxiii. 42.

all human glory. He detected the wickedneſs, and confounded the pride of the Scribes and Phariſees, and rulers; and made it appear, that what is highly eſteemed among men, το υψηλον, the ſummit of their boaſted excellency, is worthleſs, yea, abomination in the ſight of God *. And by living himſelf in a ſtate of poverty, and aſſociating chiefly with poor people, he placed the vanity of the diſtinctions and affluence which mankind generally admire and envy, in the moſt ſtriking and humiliating light. Such likewiſe was and will be the effect of his goſpel. When faithfully preached, it is found mighty, through God, to the pulling down ſtrong holds, high thoughts, and every ſpecies of ſelf-exaltation. When the convincing word touches the heart, it has an effect like the hand-writing which Belſhazzar ſaw upon the wall †. In that day the lofty looks of man are humbled, and his haughtineſs bowed down ‡; he dares no longer plead the goodneſs of his heart, or truſt to the work of his hands. A ſenſe of forgiveneſs and acceptance thro' the Beloved, received by faith in his atonement, lays him ſtill lower; he now renounces as loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, all that he once eſteemed his gain, and is glad that he has nothing to truſt or glory in but the croſs §. Farther, every mountain that oppoſes the kingdom of MESSIAH, in due time muſt ſink into a plain ‖. Though the nations rage, and the rulers take counſel together, he who ſitteth in the heavens will ſupport and maintain his own work, and all their power and policy ſhall fall before it.

The crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough places ſmooth. He came to rectify the perverſe diſpoſition of the hearts of men, to ſoften and ſubdue their obſtinate ſpirits, and to form to himſelf a willing people

* Luke xvi. 15. † Dan. v. 6. ‡ Iſai. ii. 11. § Phil. iii. 7, &c.
‖ Zech. iv. 7.

in the day of his power. The Jewiſh teachers, by their traditions and will-worſhip, had given an apparent obliquity to the ſtraight and perfect rule of the law of God, and deformed the beauties of holineſs, binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, upon the conſcience; but he vindicated the law from their corrupt gloſſes, and made the path of obedience plain, practicable, and pleaſant.

Thus the glory of the Lord was revealed. Not to every eye; many, prejudiced by his outward appearance, and by the low miſtaken views the Jews indulged of the office and kingdom of MESSIAH, whom they expected, could ſee no form or excellence in him, that they ſhould deſire him; but his diſciples could ſay, *We beheld his glory**. He ſpake with authority. His word was power. He controlled the elements, he raiſed the dead. He knew, and revealed, and judged the thoughts of mens hearts. He forgave ſin, and thus exerciſed the rights and diſplayed the perfections of divine ſovereignty in his own perſon. But the prophecy looks forward to future times. After his aſcenſion he filled his apoſtles and diſciples with light and power, and ſent them forth in all directions to proclaim his love and grace to a ſinful world. Then the glory of the Lord was revealed, and ſpread from one kingdom to another people. We ſtill wait for the full accompliſhment of this promiſe, and expect a time when the whole earth ſhall be filled with his glory: For the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it. It is to the power of his word that we owe the continuance of day and night, and the regular return of the ſeaſons of the year. But theſe appointments are only for a limited term; the hour is coming, when the frame of nature ſhall be diſſolved. Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away; but not a jot or tittle of what he hath declared

* John i. 14.

declared concerning his kingdom of grace ſhall fail, till the whole be fulfilled.

Thoſe of you who have heard the *Meſſiah* will do well to recollect, whether you were affected by ſuch thoughts as theſe while this paſſage was performed; or whether you were only captivated by the muſic, and paid no more regard to the words than if they had no meaning. They are, however, the great truths of God. May they engage your ſerious attention, now they are thus ſet before you!

SERMON III.

The Shaking of the Heavens and the Earth.

HAGGAI ii. 6, 7.

Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land: And I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.

GOD ſhook the earth when he proclaimed his law to Iſrael from Sinai. The deſcription, though very ſimple, preſents to our thoughts a ſcene unſpeakably majeſtic, grand, and awful. The mountain was in flames at the top, and trembled to its baſis *. Dark clouds, thunderings, and lightnings filled the air. The hearts of the people, of the whole people, trembled likewiſe; and even Moſes himſelf ſaid, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* Then, as the apoſtle, referring to this paſſage, obſerves, The voice of the Lord ſhook the earth †. But the prophet here ſpeaks of another, a greater, a more important, and extenſive concuſſion. Yet once a little while, and I will ſhake not the earth only, but the heavens.

If we really believe that the ſcriptures are true, that the prophecies were delivered by holy men, who ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they ſhall all be certainly fulfilled; how ſtudious ſhould we be to attain a right underſtanding of paſſages and events, in which we are ſo nearly intereſted, that our hearts may be duly affected by

* Exod. xix. 16,—19. † Heb. xii. 26.

by them? But, alas! experience and obſervation ſtrongly confirm the remark of the poet,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

If you put a teleſcope into the hands of a child, he will probably admire the outſide, eſpecially if it be finely ornamented. But the uſe of it, in giving a more diſtinct view of diſtant objects, is what the child has no conception of. The muſic of the *Meſſiah* is but an ornament of the words, which have a very weighty ſenſe. This ſenſe no muſic can explain, and when rightly underſtood, will have ſuch an effect as no muſic can produce. That the muſic of the *Meſſiah* has a great effect in its own kind, I can eaſily believe. The ancients, to deſcribe the power of the muſic of Orpheus, pretend, that when he played upon his harp, the wild beaſts thronged around him to liſten, and ſeemed to forget their natural fierceneſs. Such expreſſions are figurative, and deſigned to intimate, that by his addreſs and inſtructions, he civilized men of fierce and ſavage diſpoſitions. But if we were to allow the account to be true in the literal ſenſe, I ſhould ſtill ſuppoſe that the wild beaſts were affected by his muſic only while they heard it, and that it did not actually change their natures, and render lions and tigers gentle as lambs, from that time forward. Thus I can allow, that they who heard the *Meſſiah* might be greatly impreſſed during the performance; but when it was ended, I ſuppoſe they would retain the very ſame diſpoſitions they had before it began. And many, I fear, were no more affected by this ſublime declaration of the Lord's deſign to ſhake the heavens and the earth, than they would have been, if the ſame muſic had been ſet to the words of a common ballad.

The Jews, when they returned from captivity, and

undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord, met with many diſcouragements. They were diſturbed by the oppoſition and arts of their enemies, who at one time ſo far prevailed, as to compel them, for a ſeaſon, to intermit the work. And when the foundation of the temple was laid, the joy of thoſe who hoped ſoon to ſee the ſolemn worſhip of God reſtored, was damped by the grief of others, who remembered the magnificence of the firſt temple, and wept to think how far the ſecond temple would come ſhort of it *. In theſe circumſtances, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were ſent to animate the people by a promiſe, that inferior as the ſecond temple might appear, compared with that which Solomon built, the glory of the latter houſe ſhould be greater than the glory of the former †. Had this depended upon a profuſion of ſilver and gold, the Lord could have provided it; for *the ſilver is mine, and the gold is mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* But the glory ſpoken of was of a different kind. The preſence of MESSIAH in the ſecond temple, would render it far more honourable and glorious, though leſs pompous, than the temple of Solomon; and would be attended with greater conſequences, than even the manifeſtation of the God of Iſrael on Mount Sinai. Then he only ſhook the earth; but under the ſecond temple, he would ſhake the heavens and the earth, the ſea and the dry land, to introduce the kingdom of MESSIAH.

We may conſider from the words,

I. A character of MESSIAH: *The Deſire of all nations.*

II. The effects of his appearance: *Shaking the heavens and the earth.*

III. *His filling the houſe with glory.* This cloſe of ver. 7. is not in the paſſage ſet to muſic, but as it is

* Hag. ii. 3. † Ezra iii. 12, 13.

is an eminent part of the prophecy, I ſhall not exclude it

I. MESSIAH is ſtyled, *The Deſire of all nations.* The propriety of this title may be illuſtrated by two conſiderations.

1. Before he came into the world to ſave ſinners, an expectation prevailed in many nations, that a great deliverer and friend of mankind was at hand. This was, perhaps, partly the effect of ſome ancient traditions founded on the promiſes of God reſpecting the ſeed of the woman, the traces of which, though much corrupted by the addition of fables, were not worn out—but might be chiefly owing to ſeveral diſperſions of the people of Iſrael, and imperfect notices derived from the ſcriptures in their hands. The ſenſe of many prophecies concerning MESSIAH, though miſapplied, is remarkably expreſſed in a ſhort poem of Virgil, written a few years before our Saviour's birth. This eclogue, of which we have a beautiful imitation in our own language by Mr Pope, affords a ſufficient proof that the heathens had an idea of ſome illuſtrious perſonage, who would ſhortly appear, and reſtore peace, proſperity, and all the bleſſings of their imaginary golden age to mankind. The miſeries and evils with which the world was filled, made the interpoſition of ſuch a deliverer highly deſirable. There were even a few among the heathens, ſuch as Socrates and his immediate diſciples, who ſeem to have felt the neceſſity of a divine teacher; and to be ſenſible that man, in a ſtate of nature, was too depraved, and too ignorant, to be either able or diſpoſed to worſhip God acceptably without one. There is reaſon to believe, that the Revelation which we enjoy, though deſpiſed by too many who affect to be called philoſophers in modern times, would have been highly prized by the wiſeſt and beſt of the philoſophers of antiquity. Socrates thought men were not capable

of knowing and expreſſing their own wants, nor of aſking what was good for themſelves, unleſs it ſhould pleaſe God to ſend them an inſtructor from heaven, to teach them how to pray. And therefore,

2. The need that all nations had of ſuch a Saviour, is ſufficient to eſtabliſh his right to this title, admitting they had no knowledge or expectation of him. If we could ſuppoſe a nation involved for ages in the darkneſs of night, though they had no previous notion of light, yet light might be ſaid *to be* their deſire, becauſe the light, whenever they ſhould enjoy it, would put an end to their calamity, would anſwer their wants, and in that ſenſe accompliſh their wiſhes; for if they could not directly wiſh for light, they would naturally wiſh for relief. The heathens were miſerably bewildered. They had a thirſt for happineſs, which could not be ſatisfied by any, or all the expedients and purſuits within their reach. They had fears and forebodings of conſcience, for which they knew no remedy. They were ſo ſenſible, both of their guilt and their weakneſs, that being ignorant of the character of the true God, and of that forgiveneſs which is with him, in times of extremity they frequently offered the moſt expenſive ſacrifices to the objects of their idolatrous ſuperſtition, even the blood and lives of their children *. When MESSIAH appeared, as he was the glory of Iſrael, ſo he was a light to the Gentiles, as we ſhall have opportunity of obſerving more at large hereafter. He therefore who came purpoſely to bleſs the nations, by turning them from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols to ſerve the living and true God, may juſtly be called their *deſire*, though, in the time of their ignorance, they could form no ſuitable conception of him.

II. *I will ſhake the heavens and the earth.* This part

* Micah vi. 6.

part of the prophecy has been, in a meaſure, literally fulfilled. At his birth a new ſtar appeared. At his death the ſun withdrew his ſhining, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the dead aroſe. During his life he often ſuſpended and over-ruled the ſtated laws of nature, and exerciſed ſupreme power over the viſible and inviſible worlds. He ſhook the kingdom of darkneſs, ſpoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his croſs. He ſhook the kingdoms of the earth; the idols trembled and diſappeared before his goſpel, till at length the Roman empire renounced heatheniſm, and embraced the Chriſtian name.

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative. Mountains and trees, land and water, ſun and moon, heaven and earth, often ſignify nations, people, and governments. And particularly, heaven and earth are uſed to denote the religious and political eſtabliſhment of Iſrael; or, as we ſay, their conſtitution in church and ſtate. This without doubt is the primary ſenſe here. The appearance of MESSIAH ſhall be connected with the total diſſolution of the Jewiſh economy. The whole of their Levitical inſtitution was fulfilled, ſuperſeded, and abrogated by MESSIAH, which was ſolemnly ſignified, by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom at his death. And a few years afterwards the temple itſelf was deſtroyed; by which event, the worſhip of God, according to the law, of which the temple-ſervice was an eſſential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. Their civil ſtate likewiſe was diſſolved, they were extirpated from the promiſed land, and diſperſed far and wide among the nations of the earth. Though in one ſenſe they are preſerved by the wonderful providence of God, as a diſtinct people, unaffected by the changes and cuſtoms around them: in another ſenſe they are not a people, having neither ſettlement nor government,

but living as ſtrangers and foreigners in every country where their lot has been caſt *. Nothing like this can be found in the hiſtory of mankind. It is an obvious, ſtriking, and perpetual proof of the truth of the Scriptures. What was foretold concerning them by Moſes and the ſucceeding prophets, is accompliſhed to a demonſtration before our eyes. How unlikely was it once that it ſhould be thus! yet thus it muſt be, becauſe the mouth of the Lord has ſpoken it. And all that he has ſpoken is equally ſure. He will yet again ſhake the heavens and the earth, diſſolve the frame of nature, and execute his threatened judgments upon all thoſe who do not receive and obey his goſpel.

III. *He ſhall fill this houſe with glory.* He did ſo when he condeſcended to viſit it in perſon. The blind and the lame came thither to him, and he healed them †. Children felt his power, and ſung hoſanna to the Son of David, a title appropriate to MESSIAH; and when the Phariſees rebuked them, he ſaid, *If theſe ſhould hold their peace, the ſtones would cry out* ‡. As the Lord in his own houſe, he purged the temple, and drove out thoſe who profaned it, and not one of his enemies durſt offer the leaſt reſiſtance to his will. And when he left it the laſt time, with ſovereign authority, he denounced that awful ſentence, which was ſoon afterwards executed by the Romans, both upon the temple and the nation ‖. His glory filled the temple when he was an infant, ſo that Simeon and Anna then acknowledged his character, and ſpake of him to thoſe who were waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael §. Eſpecially his glory was manifeſted when he proclaimed himſelf the fountain of life, and invited every thirſty, weary,

* Hoſea iii. 4. † Matt. xxi. 15, 16. ‡ Luke xix. 40.
‖ Matt. xxiii. 37. § Luke ii. 25, 38.

weary ſinner to come to him, to drink, and live for ever *.

The temple of Jeruſalem has been long ſince deſtroyed. But he has ſtill a houſe, *a houſe not made with hands*. This is his church, compriſing all the members of his myſtical body. He dwells in each of them individually; he dwells in and among them collectively. Where two or three are met in his name, where his ordinances are adminiſtered and prized, where his goſpel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there he is preſent in the midſt of them. There his glory is ſeen, his voice heard, his power felt, his goodneſs taſted, and the ſavour of his name is diffuſed as a precious ointment, which refreſhes the hearts of his people, renews their ſtrength, and comforts them under all their ſorrows and cares. The glory and magnificence of the temple-worſhip, even in the days of Solomon, was faint, compared with the glory diſplayed to the hearts of believers, who worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, under the New-Teſtament diſpenſation. But it can only be perceived by an enlightened and ſpiritual mind. To outward appearance all may be low and humiliating. The malice of their enemies has often conſtrained his people to aſſemble in woods and on mountains, in places under ground, or in the dead of the night, to ſecrete themſelves from informers. But vaulted roofs, and coſtly garments, the ſolemn parade of proceſſions, muſic and choriſters, and the preſence of nobles and dignitaries, are not neceſſary to conſtitute the glory of goſpel-worſhip. It is enough that he, in whoſe name they meet, condeſcends to viſit them with the power and influence of his Spirit, to animate and hear their prayers, to feed them with the good word of his grace, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. If they have

* John vii. 37.

theſe bleſſings, they deſire no more, they are compenſated for all their difficulties and hardſhips; and however unnoticed and deſpiſed by the world, they can ſay, *This is none other than the houſe of God, this is the gate of heaven* *. For they approach by faith to the city of the living God, the Jeruſalem which is above, to the worſhip which is carried on day without night, by the innumerable company of angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect †.

But every member of this myſtical temple, being by nature afar off from God, experiences a previous change, which may be not unfitly deſcribed by the terms of my text. Before the Lord takes poſſeſſion of his people, and in order to it, *He ſhakes the heavens and the earth.* Their former views of God and of themſelves are altered by a light which penetrates the ſoul. All that they have been building in religion, till then, is ſhaken and overturned. Their vain hopes are ſhaken to the foundation. This conculſion makes way for the perception of his glory as a Saviour. In this day of his power they are made willing to throw open the gates of their hearts, that the King of glory may enter.

But as I do not ſtand here to amuſe you with a declamation on a ſubject in which you are not immediately intereſted, and as my office as a preacher both warrants and requires me to addreſs myſelf not only to your underſtandings but likewiſe to your conſciences, I muſt be allowed, before I conclude, to propoſe this queſtion to your conſideration, Is MESSIAH, the deſire of all nations, the object of your chief deſire? How much depends upon the anſwer? Do you wiſh to know your preſent ſtate in the ſight of God? If you are faithful to yourſelves you may be ſatisfied, provided you will abide by the deciſion of the Scripture. God is well pleaſed *in* his Son; if you are well-pleaſed *with* him, if he

* Gen. xxviii. 17. † Heb. xii. 24.

he is precious to you, and the deſire of your ſoul is ſupremely directed to him, then you aſſuredly poſſeſs the beginning, the fore-taſte, and the earneſt of eternal life. If you ſo enter into the deſcriptions given in the Bible, of his perſon, love, office, and glory, as to place your whole dependence upon him, to devote yourſelves ſimply to him, and to place your happineſs in his favour, then you are happy indeed! happy even at preſent, though not exempted from a ſhare in the afflictions incident to this mortal ſtate. For your ſins are pardoned, your perſons are accepted in the Beloved; to you belong the promiſes of guidance, protection, and ſupply through life, victory over death, and then a crown of glory which fadeth not away. To ſay all in a few words, God is your Father, and heaven is your home.

But on the other hand, If you truſt in yourſelf that you are righteous and good, at leaſt comparatively ſo; if your attachment to the buſineſs or the pleaſure of the world engroſſes your thoughts and application, ſo that you have no leiſure to attend to the record which God has given of his Son, or no reliſh for the ſubject, you have been hitherto guilty of treating the moſt glorious diſplay of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God with contempt. Many perſons thus employed and thus diſpoſed, bear reſpectable characters in civil life, from which I do not wiſh to detract. But however amiable you may be in the judgment of your fellow-creatures, you are a ſinner in the ſight of God, and will be treated by him as an enemy to his government and glory, if you finally perſiſt in a rejection of his goſpel. The great point which will determine your ſtate for eternity, will be this, What think you of Chriſt? For it is written, *If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* *. He muſt and will

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

will fall under the curſe and condemnation of the law, and be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, (for to-morrow is not ours), may you hear his voice, and flee for refuge to the hope ſet before you!

S. E. R.

SERMON IV.

The Lord coming to his Temple.

MALACHI iii. 1.—3.

The Lord whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his temple; even the Meſſenger of the covenant in whom ye delight: behold, he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who ſhall ſtand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers ſope.—And he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs.

WHEREUNTO ſhall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like ?* I repreſent to myſelf a number of perſons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treaſon. They are already in a ſtate of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are ſo plain, and the evidence againſt them ſo ſtrong and pointed, that there is not the leaſt doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preſerve them from puniſhment. In this ſituation, it ſhould ſeem their wiſdom, to avail themſelves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardleſs of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amuſing themſelves, that they may paſs away the term of their impriſonment with as much chearfulneſs as poſſible. Among other reſources, they call in the aſſiſtance of muſic. And amidſt a great variety of ſubjects in this way, they are particularly pleaſed with one. They chuſe to make the ſolemnities of their impending trial, the character of their

* Luke vii. 31.

their Judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful ſentence to which they are expoſed, the ground-work of a muſical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the ſkill of the compoſer, in adapting the ſtyle of his muſic to the very ſolemn language and ſubject with which they are trifling. The King, however, out of his great clemency and compaſſion towards thoſe who have no pity for themſelves, prevents them with his goodneſs. Undeſired by them, he ſends them a gracious meſſage. He aſſures them that he is unwilling they ſhould ſuffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to ſubmit. He points out a way in which their confeſſion and ſubmiſſion ſhall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condeſcends to preſcribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But inſtead of taking a ſingle ſtep towards a compliance with his goodneſs, they ſet his meſſage likewiſe to muſic; and this, together with a deſcription of their preſent ſtate, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obſtinate, is ſung for their diverſion, accompanied with the ſound of cornet, flute, harp, ſackbut, pſaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of inſtruments *. Surely, if ſuch a caſe as I have ſuppoſed could be found in real life, though I might admire the muſical taſte of theſe people, I ſhould commiſerate their inſenſibility!

But is not this caſe more than a ſuppoſition? Is it not in the moſt ſerious ſenſe actually realized amongſt ourſelves? I ſhould inſult your underſtandings, if I judged a long application neceſſary. I know my ſuppoſition *muſt* already have led your thoughts to the ſubject of the *Meſſiah*, and to the ſpirit and temper of at leaſt the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The holy Scripture concludes all mankind under ſin †. It charges them

* Dan. iii. 5. † Rom. iii. 9.

them all with treaſon and rebellion againſt the great ſovereign Lawgiver and Benefactor; and declares the miſery to which, as ſinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-ſuffering, and waits to be gracious. The ſtroke of death, which would inſtantly place us before his awful tribunal, is ſtill ſuſpended. In the mean time he affords us his goſpel, by which he aſſures us there is forgiveneſs with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that of his great love to ſinners, he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator, in favour of all who ſhall ſue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unſpeakable love, his dreadful ſufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethſemane, and upon the croſs, are made known to us. And as his paſt humiliation, ſo his preſent glory, and his invitation to come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. Theſe are the principal points expreſſed in the paſſages of the *Meſſiah*. Mr Handel, who ſet them to muſic, has been commemorated and praiſed, many years after his death, in a place profeſſedly devoted to the praiſe and worſhip of God; yea, (if I am not miſinformed) the ſtated worſhip of God, in that place, was ſuſpended for a conſiderable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr Handel. But alas! how few are diſpoſed to praiſe and commemorate MESSIAH himſelf! The ſame great truths, diveſted of the muſic, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the oratorio with indifference, too often with contempt.

Having thus, as I conceived myſelf bound in duty, plainly and publicly delivered my ſentiments, of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of Chriſtianity the ſubject of a public amuſement, I leave what I have ſaid to your ſerious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean to trouble you often with a repetition of it.

Let

Let us now conſider the paſſage before us. If you read it with attention, and conſider the great ideas it ſuggeſts, and the emphatical language with which they are clothed, you will not, perhaps, think the manner of my introducing it wholly improper.

Malachi confirms and unites the prophecies of Iſaiah and Haggai, which were the ſubject of our two laſt diſcourſes. John is the meſſenger, ſpoken of in the beginning of the firſt verſe, ſent to prepare the way of the Lord. *Then the Lord himſelf ſhall come ſuddenly to his temple*, that is, immediately after the appearance of his forerunner, and with regard to the people in general, unexpectedly.

The queſtion, *Who may abide the day of his coming?* intimates the greatneſs and ſolemnity of the event. If we take his coming in an extenſive ſenſe to denote the whole of his ſojourning upon earth, from his incarnation to his aſcenſion, it is unſpeakably the greateſt of all events recorded in the annals of mankind; and though he lived in the form of a ſervant, and died the death of a malefactor, the vaſt conſequences which depend upon his appearance under theſe humiliating circumſtances, rendered it a manner of coming every way worthy of himſelf. It afforded a more awful diſcovery of the majeſty, glory, and holineſs of God, than was diſplayed upon Mount Sinai, and proved a cloſer and more ſearching appeal to the hearts and conſciences of men. To enter more into the ſpirit and meaning of the queſtion here propoſed, we ſhall briefly take notice of the following points, which the words offer to our ſerious meditation. May the Holy Spirit, whoſe office it is to glorify the Saviour, enlighten our hearts to underſtand them, with application to ourſelves!

I. The *names* which are here aſcribed to MESSIAH.

II. The ſuddenneſs of his coming.

III. The ſearching power of it in general, expreſſed *by a refiner's fire* and *by fullers ſope*.

IV. Its

IV. Its purifying power *on the ſons of Levi*, the prieſthood in particular.

I. The names aſcribed to MESSIAH.

The Lord. It is a general rule with our tranſlators to expreſs LORD in capital letters, where it anſwers to Jehovah in the Hebrew, and there only. But this place is an exception. The word here is not Jehovah, but Adonai. It is however a name of God, though not incommunicable like the other, being frequently applied to kings and ſuperiors. It properly implies authority and rule, as we ſay, *A Lord and Maſter.* In this connection it is undoubtedly a divine name. The Lord is ſaid to come to his temple, to his own temple. It was a houſe conſecrated to the God of Iſrael. The firſt temple he honoured with tokens of his preſence; the ſecond, he viſited in perſon; on which account it exceeded the firſt in glory. MESSIAH, therefore, who appeared in our nature, and was known amongſt men as a man, and who is now worſhipped both in heaven and upon earth, is the God of Iſrael. *He came to his own.* This doctrine of God manifeſt in the fleſh, is the pillar and ground of truth: the only foundation on which a ſinner, who knows the juſt deſert of his ſin, can build a ſolid hope of ſalvation, is, that Jeſus Chriſt *is the true God and eternal life* *. Unleſs this be admitted, the whole tenor, both of the Old and New Teſtament, is unintelligible. To ſay that this doctrine approves itſelf to human reaſon in its preſent fallen depraved ſtate, would be to contradict the apoſtle, who aſſerts, *that no man can ſay that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt* †. But it is highly reaſonable, to thoſe who ſee that they muſt periſh, without ſuch an atonement as ſhall declare the righteouſneſs of God, no leſs than his mercy, in the forgiveneſs of ſin; who feel the neceſſity of

* 1 John v. 20. † 1 Cor. xii. 3.

of holineſs, in order to happineſs; and are acquainted with the nature and variety of the ſnares, temptations, and enemies to which they are expoſed. Such perſons cannot venture their eternal concerns upon the dignity, or care, or power, or patience of a mere creature, however exalted and excellent; they muſt be aſſured that their Saviour is Almighty, or they dare not truſt in him; nor would they dare to honour the Son as they honour the Father, to love him with all their heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength, to devote themſelves abſolutely to his ſervice, and to expect their ſupreme happineſs from his favour and approbation, if they did not know that he is over all, God bleſſed for ever.

With reſpect to the inferior character he ſuſtains in our nature, and for our ſakes, as the Father's ſervant, he is ſtyled, *The Meſſenger of the Covenant*. He is the Gift, Promiſe, Head, and Subſtance of the everlaſting covenant. And he came himſelf to eſtabliſh the covenant, and to declare and beſtow the bleſſings it contained. *God, who had before ſpoken at divers times and in ſundry manners by his prophets, ſpoke in the fulneſs of time by his Son* *; teſtifying to him by a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, hear him; in him I am well pleaſed* †. To the ſame purpoſe our Lord ſpake of himſelf. He prefaced his gracious invitation to all, without exception, who are weary and heavy laden, to come to him for reſt ‡, with a declaration of his commiſſion and authority, ſaying, *All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one* (ουδεις) *knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, ſave the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.* The law was given by Moſes ¶; the moral law, to diſcover the extent and abounding of ſin; the ceremonial law, to point out, by typical ſacrifices and ablutions, the

* Heb. i. 1. † Matt. iii. 17. ‡ Matt. xi. 27. ¶ John i. 17.

the way in which forgiveneſs was to be ſought and obtained. But *grace*, to relieve us from the condemnation of the one, and *truth* anſwerable to the types and ſhadows of the other, came by Jeſus Chriſt.

It is farther ſaid, *The Lord whom ye ſeek, and the Meſſenger in whom ye delight.*—MESSIAH was the hope and deſire of the true Iſrael of God, from the earlieſt times; and when he was born into the world, there was a prepared people waiting and longing for him, as their conſolation. The people at large likewiſe profeſſed to expect great things from the coming of MESSIAH. But their expectations were low and earthly. They ſuppoſed that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them victory and power over the Heathen nations. The more grievous bondage of ſin under which they were enſlaved, they were not ſenſible of, nor had they a diſpoſition ſuited to the privileges and honours of the kingdom which he deſigned to eſtabliſh; and therefore, their underſtandings being darkened by prejudice and prepoſſeſſion, they could not diſcern his character. The prophecies which were read in their ſynagogues every ſabbath, marked out the time and circumſtances of MESSIAH's appearance, the places which he ſhould principally viſit, the doctrine he ſhould teach, and the works which he ſhould perform: but tho' all theſe particulars exactly applied to Jeſus, they obſtinately rejected him, and proceeded to fulfil what was farther foretold of his ſufferings and death, with ſuch a minute punctuality, as if they had deſignedly taken the prophecies for the rule of their conduct. Thus, by giving neither more nor leſs than thirty pieces of ſilver to his betrayer, by buying the potter's field, and no other, with the money afterwards; by caſting lots for one of his garments, and making a diſtribution of the reſt; by piercing his ſide, contrary to the cuſtom in

ſuch

ſuch puniſhments, and by omitting to break his legs, which, from their treatment of the malefactors who ſuffered with him, ſeems to have been uſual—In theſe and ſeveral other inſtances, they acted, though unwittingly, as if it had been their deſign and ſtudy to accompliſh the ſcriptures to their own confuſion and condemnation.

II. This was the reaſon why his coming to his temple was to them *ſudden*. Though long foretold and long expected, and though the preciſe time of his advent, and the accompanying ſigns, were accurately defined and deſcribed, yet when the ſeaſon arrived, he came ſuddenly, unlooked for, and unknown. He came upon them in an hour that they thought not of, and in a manner of which they were not aware. When he ſtood in the midſt of them, they knew not that it was he. How dreadfully does ſin harden and infatuate the hearts of men! The Jews, in our Saviour's time, furniſh us with a ſtriking inſtance, that it is poſſible for people fatally to miſcarry with the greateſt advantages and means for information in their poſſeſſion. They accounted themſelves the people of God, made their boaſt of his law, and their relation to Abraham. But they hated MESSIAH, and crucified *him*, who was the object of Abraham's faith. The oppoſition of their leaders and teachers was the moſt malicious, for many of them acted againſt the light of their minds, and were often convicted in their conſciences, tho' they refuſed to be convinced. But an ignorant attachment to theſe blind guides was ruinous to their blind followers, who, though they ſometimes, from a view of his mighty works, were ſtruck with aſtoniſhment, and conſtrained to ſay, *Is not this the ſon of David?* were at length influenced by their prieſts to prefer a murderer to him, and, with a clamorous importunity, to compel Pilate to put him to death. The like miſapprehenſions produce the like effects among

among profeſſed Chriſtians at this day. *We* likewiſe have the ſcriptures: but how many who admit their authority in words, live willingly ignorant of their contents, and act in direct contradiction to their tenor! The power of the Saviour is likewiſe diſplayed among us, his preached goſpel is daily made effectual to the great purpoſes for which it is vouchſafed; yet multitudes reject it with no leſs pertinacity than the Jews rejected him in perſon. At length death ſurpriſes them, and they ſink into darkneſs beyond recall. To them the Lord may be ſaid to come ſuddenly, for they think not of him till they actually find themſelves at his tribunal. And this not only when they are cut off by a ſudden ſtroke, but often when their diſſolution is moſt gradual, and every one about them can perceive its approach by their countenances; they themſelves, though waſting with diſeaſe, and worn out with pain, ſtill flatter themſelves with hopes of amendment and recovery to their laſt gaſp; and a lingering death is to them no leſs ſudden than if they were killed by a flaſh of lightning.

III. It is aſked, *Who may abide the day of his coming?* The effect is compared to a refiner's fire, and to fullers ſope. The refiner's fire penetrates the metal, and thereby ſearches, diſcovers, and conſumes the droſs. The fuller's ſope alſo, though it does not deſtroy the texture of the cloth, cleanſes it, by removing, and as it were conſuming the ſpots and defilement which are found in it. The idea conveyed by theſe illuſtrations is the ſame. The day of his coming is a day of trial, a trial which iſſues in the purification of the work of God in his church, and in the detection and deſtruction of every thing in it which is contrary to his will.

The coming of MESSIAH may be taken in ſeveral ſenſes.

To the Jews, according to the promiſe of God repeated from age to age, he came in perſon. *The Word*

Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them *. The term in the original alludes to the visible symbol of the divine presence, which resided in the tabernacle and temple. Thus for a season he resided among them, in a temple not made with hands, but formed by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a virgin. This was a happy time to those who received and acknowledged him. But the bulk of the nation could not abide the trial which his appearance exposed them to, they were proved by it to be but reprobate and counterfeit silver. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed †. Many specious characters were detected. The pretended sanctity and outward strictness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was evidenced to be mere hypocrisy. He exposed them in their true colours, and upon many occasions put them to shame and to silence. And where his word did not cleanse like sope, it burnt like fire, and the persons and places that rejected him were rendered inexcusable. Their great privilege of seeing his wonderful works, and hearing his gracious words, being abused, aggravated their guilt and condemnation, and made their doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To them the day of the Lord, which in their own sense they professed to desire, was darkness, and not light ‡. If he had not come and spoken to them himself, they had not had sin ‖. That is, comparatively; he found them great sinners, and they would have been such if he had not visited them. But after he had spoken to them, and spoken in vain, they had no cloke for their sin. From that time they were deprived of every shadow of plea, excuse, or extenuation. And all their former wickedness was light, compared with the enormous crime they were guilty of in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. By refusing him, they rendered their case helpless and hopeless, because there is no other name but his, given

* John i. 14. † Luke ii. 35. ‡ Amos v. 18. ‖ John xv. 22.

given among men, whereby they may be ſaved. But he cleanſed thoſe who received him, he removed their guilt, their fears, their ignorance. He gave them a clean heart and a new ſpirit. Yet to theſe alſo he was as a refiner's fire, and as fullers ſope. They likewiſe had prejudices and ſelfiſh tempers, which were not at once removed. He called them to a ſtate of ſuffering and ſelf-denial, to forſake all, and to take up their croſs daily for his ſake.

In another ſenſe, his coming is not reſtrained to a particular time. Wherever his goſpel is preached, the Lord is come. It is by the goſpel he rides forth proſperouſly, conquering and to conquer *. Thus he has promiſed to be preſent with his miniſters, *and wherever two or three are met in his name*, to the end of the world. Thus he is come to us. And the effects are the ſame as when he was perſonally upon earth. His goſpel ſtill diſcovers the thoughts of many hearts. Many perſons who till then were reputed religious, by the contempt they caſt upon this wonderful expedient of infinite wiſdom and love to ſave ſinners, manifeſt their ignorance and hatred of the law and holineſs of God, and that the religion they pretend to is an empty lifeleſs form, deſtitute of love and power. To them, though in itſelf a ſavour of life, it proves a ſavour of death. It provokes their enmity, increaſes their obduracy, and leaves them without excuſe. But it is life indeed to thoſe who receive it. They are raiſed by it from a death of ſin, unto a life of righteouſneſs and peace. Their tempers, deſires, purſuits, and hopes are changed and elevated. Old things paſs away, and all things become new to them, according as it is written, *If any man be in Chriſt Jeſus, he is a new creature* †.

He comes to individuals by the power of his Spirit. This makes the word of his goſpel effectual. For the kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power.

* Pſal. xlv. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

When he thus viſits the hearts of ſinners, his word is like fire and ſope; *quick and powerful, ſharper than a two-edged ſword* *. Then they feel and tremble, and cry out with the prophet, *Wo is me, I am undone.* But in this way their droſs is conſumed, their defilement removed. When he thus wounds, he likewiſe heals. He gives them faith; by faith they look unto him, and are enlightened and ſaved.

We ſurely expect that he will come again. Not as he once came, in a ſtate of humiliation. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of Sorrows, who hung, and bled, and died upon the croſs for our ſins, will return in glory. *Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him* †. Concerning this day, emphatically called the day of the Lord, we may well ſay, *Who may abide it?* To thoſe who have not been the ſubjects of his refining operations here, he will then be a conſuming fire. That great day, (for which all other days were made), *when the Lord ſhall deſcend with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, ſhall be as ſtubble,* and the day that cometh *ſhall burn them up* ‡. Where then ſhall the impenitent ungodly ſinner appear? But it will be a joyful day to them that love his appearing. He will ariſe upon them, as the Sun of Righteouſneſs, with healing on his wings; he will wipe away their tears, vindicate their characters, acknowledge them before the aſſembled world, and ſay unto them, *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* ‖.

IV. It is particularly ſaid, *He will purify the ſons of Levi,* that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs. *The ſons of Levi,* the prieſts, the officiating miniſters of God, *were gone out of the way, and had corrupted the covenant of the Lord, and thereby*

* Heb. iv. 12. † Rev. i. 7. ‡ Mal. iv. 1. ‖ Matth. xxv. 34.

thereby had cauſed many to ſtumble * ; they diſhonoured their office, and became themſelves vile and contemptible. Thus they went on from bad to worſe, till the men of that generation filled up the meaſure of the iniquity of their forefathers, by the rejection of MESSIAH. He alſo rejected them. The blaſted barren fig-tree†, which withered to the very root at his word, was an emblem of their condition. In a little time, wrath came upon them to the uttermoſt; they ſaw the temple in which they had truſted, and which they had profaned, deſtroyed by fire, and the greater part of them periſhed. But a remnant of them was purified. We read, that after his aſcenſion, a great company of the prieſts were obedient to the faith‡. And his apoſtles and diſciples were ſent forth with a new ſpirit, and in a new character, to offer and to ſerve in righteouſneſs. The purport of this paſſage has been repeatedly exemplified under the Chriſtian diſpenſation. A declenſion from the ſimplicity and purity of worſhip, principles, and morals, was viſible very early in the church. The progreſs of it was rapid, eſpecially from the time of Conſtantine. When perſecution ceaſed, and a tide of wealth and worldly honours flowed in upon thoſe who, by their profeſſion, were bound to be patterns of humility and ſelf-denial to others; from that period, till the Reformation, eccleſiaſtical hiſtory affords us little more than a detail of ſuch inſtances of pride, intrigue, oppreſſion, and cruelty, under the pretext of religion, as had not been known among the heathens. And the nations which were relieved from the chains and darkneſs of Popery at the Reformation, did not long preſerve much more than a name and a form to diſtinguiſh them. In moſt countries the ſtate became the *idol* of the church, and the church the *creature* of the ſtate. How it is with us in this nation, I need not ſay. Facts ſpeak for themſelves. It is a mournful fact,

* Mal. ii. 8, 9. † Matth. xxi. 19. ‡ Acts vi. 7.

that the miniſtry is become contemptible; nor is it difficult to aſſign the cauſe. But we are favoured with the goſpel, and are eye-witneſſes of its purifying power. It ſtill produces the effects which marked its progreſs when it was preached by the apoſtles. It enlightens the dark mind, ſoftens the hard heart, heals the wounded ſpirit; and many perſons who before were burdenſome to ſociety, are rendered by it ornamental and uſeful. When every other argument and motive has failed of ſucceſs, the conſideration of the mercies of God in Chriſt, revealed by the goſpel, conſtrains the believing ſinner to preſent himſelf a living, willing, holy ſacrifice unto God. Thus being purified by the blood of Jeſus, he offers to the Lord a ſacrifice in righteouſneſs. Such principles and aims are eſſential to a Chriſtian miniſter. He knows the terrors of the Lord, and has taſted of his goodneſs. He is conſtrained by love, the love of Chriſt and the love of ſouls. He preaches, as the apoſtle did, Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified; a ſubject which, though deſpiſed and reproached by the formal Jew and the ſceptical Greek, is evidenced by its efficacy to be the wiſdom and power of God. Such miniſters may be, and frequently are, depreciated and diſregarded; but they cannot be contemptible, until integrity, benevolence, and uſefulneſs, are the proper objects of contempt.

SER-

SERMON V.

Immanuel.

ISAIAH vii. 14.

Behold, a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and ſhall call his name IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

THERE is a ſignature of wiſdom and power impreſſed upon the works of God, which evidently diſtinguiſhes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the ſplendour of the ſun, but the glimmering light of the glow-worm, proclaims his glory. The ſtructure and growth of a blade of graſs, are the effects of the ſame power which produced the fabric of the heavens and the earth. In his word likewiſe he is inimitable. He has a ſtyle and manner peculiarly his own. What he is pleaſed to declare of himſelf by the prophet, may be prefixed as a proper motto to the whole revelation of his will in the Bible. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts* *. This ſuperiority of his thoughts to ours, cauſes a proportionable difference in his manner of operation. His ways are above our conceptions, and often contrary to them. He ſometimes produces great effects, by means, which, to us, appear unſuitable and weak. Thus he gave Gideon a complete victory, not by providing him an army equal to that of the enemy, but by three hundred men furniſhed with earthen pitchers and lamps †. At other times the greatneſs of his

 preparations,

* Iſai. lv. 8. 9. † Judges vii. 19. 20.

preparations, intimates that there are difficulties in the caſe, inſuperable to any power but his own, where our narrow apprehenſions, until enlightened and enlarged by his teaching, can ſcarcely perceive any difficulty. It is eminently ſo with reſpect to the reſtoration of fallen man to his favour. We have but ſlight thoughts of his holineſs, and therefore are but ſlightly affected by the evil of ſin. But though he be rich in mercy, no wiſdom, but his own, could have propoſed an expedient, whereby the exerciſe of his mercy towards ſinners might be made to correſpond with his juſtice and truth, and with the honour of his moral government. His goſpel reveals this expedient, and points out a way in which mercy and truth meet together; and his inflexible righteouſneſs is diſplayed, in perfect harmony with the peace of ſinners who ſubmit to his appointment; and thus God appears not only gracious but juſt, in receiving them to favour. This is the greateſt of all his works, and exhibits the moſt glorious diſcovery of his character and perfections. The means are anſwerable to the grandeur of the deſign, and are ſummarily expreſſed in my text.

I ſhall not take up your time with attempting to clear the difficulties which have been obſerved in the context. It may ſuffice for my purpoſe to affirm, that this paſſage expreſsly and excluſively refers to MESSIAH; for which my warrant is the authority of the evangeliſts Matthew and Luke *, who directly apply it to him, and aſſure us that it was accompliſhed in him. If ſinners are to be ſaved, without injury to the honour of his law and government, (and otherwiſe they muſt periſh), two things are neceſſary.

I. That *a virgin ſhall conceive, and bring forth a ſon.*

II. That

* Matth. i. 23. Luke i. 31, 32.

II. That this ſon of the virgin ſhall have a juſt right to be called *Immanuel, God with us.*

I. *A virgin ſhall conceive, and bring forth a ſon.* The Mediator, the ſurety for ſinful men, muſt himſelf be a man. Becauſe thoſe whom he came to redeem were partakers of fleſh and blood, he therefore took part of the ſame. Had not MESSIAH engaged for us, and appeared in our nature, a caſe would have occurred, which I think we may warrantably deem incongruous to the Divine Wiſdom. I mean, that while fire and hail, ſnow and vapour, and the ſtormy wind fulfil the will of God; while the brutes are faithful to the inſtincts implanted in them by their Maker, a whole ſpecies of intelligent beings would have fallen ſhort of the original law and deſign of their creation, and indeed have acted in direct and continual oppoſition to it. For the duty of man, to love, ſerve, and truſt God with all his heart and mind, and to love his neighbour as himſelf, is founded in the very nature and conſtitution of things, and neceſſarily reſults from his relation to God, and his abſolute dependence on him as a creature. Such a diſpoſition muſt undoubtedly have been as *natural* to man before his fall, as it is for a bird to fly, or a fiſh to ſwim. The prohibitory form of the law delivered to Iſrael from Mount Sinai, is a ſufficient intimation that it was deſigned for *ſinners.* Surely our firſt parents, while in a ſtate of innocence, could not ſtand in need of warnings and threatnings to reſtrain them from worſhipping idols, or profaning the name of the great God whom they loved. Nor would it have been neceſſary to forbid murder, adultery, or injuſtice, if his poſterity had continued under the law of their creation, the law of love. But the firſt act of diſobedience degraded and diſabled man, detached him from his proper centre, if I may ſo ſpeak, and incapacitated him both for his duty and his happineſs. After his fall,

it became impoſſible for either Adam or his poſterity to obey the law of God. But MESSIAH fulfilled it exactly, as a man, and the principles of it are renewed, by the power of his grace, in all who believe on him. And though their beſt endeavours fall ſhort, *his* obedience to it is accepted on their behalf; and he will at length perfectly reſtore them to their primitive order and honour. When they ſhall ſee him as he is, they will be like him, and all their powers and faculties will be perfectly conformed to his image.

Again, MESSIAH muſt not only be a man, but a partaker of our very nature. It had been equally eaſy to the power of God to have formed the body of the ſecond Adam, as he formed the firſt, out of the duſt of the earth. But though, in this way, he would have been a true and perfect man, he would not have been more nearly related to us than to the angels. Therefore, when *God ſent forth his Son to be made under the law, to redeem us from the curſe of the law, that we might receive the adoption of children* *, and be re-admitted into his happy family, *he was made of a woman.* Thus he became our *Goel*, our near kinſman, with whom the right of redemption lay.

But farther, if he had derived his human nature altogether in the ordinary way, from ſinful parents, we ſee not how he could have avoided a participation in that defilement and depravity which the fall of Adam had entailed upon all his poſterity. But his body, that holy thing, conceived and born of a virgin, was the immediate production of God. Therefore he was perfectly pure and ſpotleſs, and qualified to be ſuch *a high prieſt, as became us, holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners* †; who needed not, as the typical high prieſts of Iſrael, *to offer up ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſin, and then*

* Gal. iv. 4, 5. † Heb. vii. 26.

*then for the ſins of the people**. Theſe difficulties were obviated by a virgin's conceiving and bearing a ſon. His obedience was without defect, his nature without blemiſh, and having no ſin of his own, when he voluntarily offered himſelf to make an atonement for the ſins of his people, his ſacrifice was, ſo far, anſwerable to the ſtrict and extenſive demands of the law and juſtice of God.

Let us make a ſolemn pauſe, and call upon our ſouls to admire and adore the wiſdom and power of God in this appointment. Thus the *Lord created a new thing upon the earth!*

II. But ſurely our admiration and gratitude will be raiſed ſtill higher, if we rightly underſtand the latter part of my text. This ſon of the virgin ſhall be called *Immanuel, God with us.* Though the human nature of Chriſt was abſolutely perfect, his obedience commenſurate to the utmoſt extent of the law, and his ſubſtitution and ſufferings for ſinners voluntary; yet, had he been no more than a man, he would not have been equal to the great undertaking of ſaving ſinners. A due conſideration of the majeſty, holineſs, authority, and goodneſs of God, will make ſin appear to be, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *exceedingly ſinful*†. Whoever has a right ſenſe of the nature and effects of that rebellion againſt the Moſt High, which the ſcripture intends by the term *Sin*, will not need many arguments to convince him, that the Mediator between God and man, muſt be poſſeſſed of ſuch dignity and power, as cannot be attributed to a creature, without deſtroying the idea of a created and dependent being, by aſcribing to him thoſe perfections which are incommunicably divine.

If MESSIAH had been a ſinleſs and perfect man, and no more, he might have yielded a complete obedience to the will of God, but it could have been only for

* Heb. vii. 27. † Rom. vii. 13.

himſelf. The moſt excellent and exalted creature cannot exceed the law of his creation. As a creature, he is bound to ſerve God with his all, and his obligations will always be equal to his ability. But an obedience acceptable and available for others, for thouſands and millions, for all who are willing to plead it, muſt be connected with a nature which is not thus neceſſarily bound. A ſinner, truly convinced of his obnoxiouſneſs to the diſpleaſure of God, muſt ſink into deſpair, notwithſtanding the intimation of a Saviour, if he were not aſſured by the ſcripture, that it was a divine perſon in the human nature who engaged for us. It is this alone affords a ſolid ground for hope, to know that he who was before all, by whom all things were made, and by whom they conſiſt, aſſumed the nature of man; that the great Lawgiver himſelf ſubmitted to be under his own law. This wonderful condeſcenſion gave an immenſe value and dignity to all that he did, to all that he ſuffered; thus he not only ſatisfied, but honoured the law. So that we may, without heſitation, affirm, that the law of God was more honoured by MESSIAH, in his obedience to it, during the few years of his reſidence upon earth, and terminated by his laſt and higheſt act of obedience in ſubmitting to the death of the croſs, than it could have been by the unſinning obedience of all mankind to the end of time.

But MESSIAH was not only to obey the law for us, he was likewiſe to expiate, to ſuſtain, and to exhauſt, the curſe due to ſin *. In this attempt, no mere creature could have endured. Nor could the ſufferings of a creature have been propoſed to the univerſe, to angels, and men, as a conſideration ſufficient to vindicate the righteouſneſs and truth of God in the remiſſion of ſin, after he had determined and ſolemnly declared *that the wages of ſin is death.* The apoſtle

* Gal. iii. 13.

apoſtle aſſures us, that *it is impoſſible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away ſin* *. They who differ from the apoſtle in their judgment, who think it very poſſible for God, if he pleaſed, to forgive the ſinner who ſhould offer a bull or a goat, or even without any offering, by the ſovereign exerciſe of his mercy, may be reminded, that the queſtion is not ſimply what God *can* do, but what it *becomes him* to do, agreeable to his perfections, and to his character as governor of the world. Of this his infinite wiſdom is the only competent judge; and we learn from his word, that it is impoſſible any blood, but that of his own Son, can cleanſe us from guilt, or ſave us from miſery. The blood of a bull or a goat, of a man or an angel, (if angels could bleed), are all equally inſufficient to the great purpoſe of declaring his righteouſneſs, of manifeſting to all intelligent creatures his inflexible diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in the very act of affording mercy to ſinners. But ſince the atoning blood is the blood of Immanuel, of him who is God with us; the ſinner who makes it his plea, builds his hope upon a rock which cannot be removed; and obtaining forgiveneſs in this way, he likewiſe obtains by it ſuch a knowledge of the heinouſneſs of ſin, as diſpoſes him from that hour to fear, hate, and forſake it.

But though forgiveneſs be an eſſential part of ſalvation, it is not the whole. We cannot be happy, except the power of ſin be likewiſe deſtroyed. A well-grounded hope in the mercy of God, is connected with a thirſt for ſanctification, and a conformity to his image. But neither this hope nor this deſire are natural to us. Our caſe requires the help of an almighty arm, of the power which can cauſe the *blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, the dead to ariſe*; which can take away the heart of ſtone, and create a heart of fleſh. So likewiſe the difficulties attendant on our

* Heb. x. 4.

Chriſtian profeſſion, ariſing from the ſpirit of the world around us, the ſnares to which we are expoſed in every ſituation, our weakneſs, the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, the ſubtilty, vigilance, and power of our ſpiritual enemies, are ſo many and great, that unleſs he, on whom we depend for ſalvation, be able to ſave to the uttermoſt, we can have no ſecurity, either for our progreſs, or our perſeverance, in the grace of God. Unleſs the Saviour of ſinners be omnipreſent, omniſcient, unchangeable, *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever*, that is, unleſs he be God, how can he anſwer the prayers, ſatisfy the wants, and relieve the diſtreſſes of all who truſt in him in every age, and of all who in every place equally need his ſupport at the ſame moment? Or how can he engage to give reſt to every weary ſoul, to ſecure them from periſhing, and to beſtow upon them eternal life? David comfortably concluded, that becauſe the Lord was his ſhepherd, he ſhould not want, and had no reaſon to fear *, not even when paſſing through the valley of the ſhadow of death. To us Jeſus is made known as the great Shepherd of the ſheep; but how can we place the like confidence in him, unleſs we likewiſe are aſſured that our ſhepherd is the Lord?

I ſhall not attempt to vindicate this doctrine largely from the exceptions of thoſe who call themſelves men of reaſon. It is a point of revelation, and it is expreſsly revealed. It demands our aſſent upon the authority of God, who requires us to receive this record which he has given us of his Son. Thus far it approves itſelf to our reaſon, that however difficult it may be to our conceptions, yet thus it muſt be, upon a ſuppoſition that ſinners can be ſaved without prejudice to the honour of the divine government. If we affirm, that he who was born in a ſtable, and ſuffered as a malefactor upon Mount Golgotha, is the true God and eternal life, many will think it a hard ſaying.

But

* Pſal. xxiii. 1. 4.

But it is the doctrine of ſcripture, the very pillar and ground of truth; the only foundation of hope for an awakened conſcience, the only ſtandard by which we can properly eſtimate the evil of ſin, the worth of the ſoul, and the love of God. We do not, however, ſay, that the human nature of Chriſt, conſidered in itſelf, poſſeſſes the attributes of Deity, or is the proper object of worſhip; nor do we ſuppoſe that God could ſuffer, bleed, or die. But we ſay, with the apoſtle, *that God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf* *. We believe that the human nature was ſo intimately and indiſſolubly united to the divine, that the properties and actings of each nature are juſtly aſcribed to the one perſon of Chriſt, God-man, *Immanuel, God with us.* Thus we read that the final judgment of the world is committed to a man, and that *God hath purchaſed his church with his own blood* †.

Behold then the character of MESSIAH in this prophecy! a man! a God! a divine perſon in the human nature. *God manifeſted in the fleſh! Immanuel, God with us.*

As fallen creatures, we had loſt the true knowledge of God, and were unable to form ſuch conceptions of his greatneſs and goodneſs, as are neceſſary to inſpire us with reverence, to engage our confidence, or produce obedience to his will. His glory ſhines in the heavens and fills the earth; we are ſurrounded by the tokens of his power and preſence; yet, till we are inſtructed by his word, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit, he is to us an *unknown God.* The prevalence of idolatry was early, and (with an exception to the people of Iſrael) ſoon became univerſal. Men who boaſted of their reaſon, worſhipped the ſun and moon, yea, the works of their own hands, inſtead of the Creator. And even where revelation is vouchſafed, the bulk of mankind live without God in the world.

* 2 Cor. v. 19. † Acts xvii. 31. Acts xx. 28.

world. But he is known, truſted, and ſerved, by thoſe who know MESSIAH. To them his glory is diſplayed in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt *. His agency is perceived in the creation, his providence is acknowledged, and his preſence felt as *God with us.*

As fallen creatures, God is againſt us, and we are againſt him. The alienation of our hearts is the great cauſe of our ignorance of him. We are willingly ignorant. The thoughts of him are unwelcome to us, and we do not like to retain him in our knowledge. Guilt is the parent of Atheiſm. A ſecret foreboding, that if there be a God, we are obnoxious to his diſpleaſure; and that if he takes cognizance of our conduct, we have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from him, conſtrains many perſons to try to perſuade themſelves that there is no God; and many more to think, or at leaſt to wiſh, that if there be a God, he does not concern himſelf with human affairs. What a proof is this of the enmity of the heart of man againſt him! that ſo many perſons who would tremble at the thought of being in a ſhip, driven by the winds and waves, without compaſs or pilot, ſhould yet think it deſirable, if it were poſſible, to be aſſured, that in a world like this, ſo full of uncertainty, trouble, and change, all things were left at random, without the interference of a ſupreme governor. But this enmity, theſe dark apprehenſions, are removed, when the goſpel is received by faith. For it brings us the welcome news, that there is forgiveneſs with him; that God is reconciled in his Son to all who ſeek his mercy. In this ſenſe, likewiſe, MESSIAH is *Immanuel, God with us*, on our ſide, no longer the avenger of ſin, but the author of ſalvation.

Immanuel is *God with us*, God in our nature ſtill. He ſuffered as a man, and as a man he now reigns on the throne of glory; exerciſing all power and authority, and receiving all ſpiritual worſhip both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of all principalities;

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

cipalities and powers, thrones and dominions. Thus man is not only ſaved, but unſpeakably honoured and ennobled. He is brought into the neareſt relation to him, who is over all bleſſed for ever. The angels adore him; but only redeemed ſinners can ſay, *He loved us, and gave himſelf for us; he has waſhed us from our ſin in his own blood* *; he is our Saviour, our ſhepherd, our friend, our *Immanuel*, *God with us.*

I ſhall conclude with a few obvious reflections which offer from this important ſubject.

1. What a cold aſſent is paid to the doctrine of the Godhead of Chriſt by many who profeſs and receive it as a truth! They have received from education, from books or miniſters, what is called an orthodox ſcheme of religious ſentiments, and with this they are contented. They have not been accuſtomed to doubt of it, and therefore take it for granted that they really believe it. But as I have already hinted, it is ſo contrary to our natural apprehenſions, that no man can, from his heart, ſay that *Jeſus Chriſt is Lord*, unleſs he be taught of God. And a cordial belief of this point will and muſt produce great and abiding effects. They who know the Saviour's name, will ſo truſt in him, as to renounce every other ground of confidence. They will love him ſupremely, and forſake every thing that ſtands in competition with his favour. They will glory in his croſs, they will eſpouſe his cauſe, and devote themſelves to his ſervice. They will make continual application to him, that they may receive out of his fulneſs grace according to their need. They will obey his precepts, and walk in his Spirit. Happy were it, indeed, if all who join in repeating the Creed, and who bow their knee at the mention of his name, were thus minded. But the lives, tempers, and purſuits of thouſands, give too ſure an evidence, that when they expreſs their aſſent with their lips, they neither know what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm. Their acknowledgment

* Gal. ii. 20. Rev. i. 5.

knowledgement of his character, has no more salutary influence, than that of the evil spirits when he was upon earth, who said, and perhaps with a much fuller conviction, *We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God* *.

2. What a strong foundation does this doctrine afford for the faith and hope of those who indeed know MESSIAH, and have put their trust in him. This truth is the rock upon which the church is built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. *If God be for us, who shall be against us?* The difficulties of our warfare are great, the enemies of our peace are many. The world may frown, and Satan will rage, but Jesus has overcome the world, and is greater than all our foes. He will guide his people with his unerring wisdom, support them with his almighty arm, supply them out of the inexhaustible riches of his grace, revive them when fainting, heal them when wounded, plead for them above as their great high priest, manage for them upon earth as their great shepherd, and at last make them more than conquerors, and give them a crown of life!

3. On the contrary, how dreadful must be the state of those who finally reject him, and say in their hearts, *We will not have this man to rule over us!* He is now proposed as a Saviour, he invites sinners to come to him, that they may have life, and assures us, *that him that cometh he will in no wise cast out* †. Happy are they who hear and obey his voice to-day, while it is called to-day. To-morrow is uncertain. Death may be at the door, and at death our state will be determined for eternity. They who refuse him now, in the character of a Saviour, must then appear at his tribunal, and stand before him as their Judge; and must answer, in their own persons, for all their transgressions of the holy law, and for their contempt of the gospel of the grace of God!

SER-

* Mark i. 24. † John vi. 37.

SERMON VI.

Salvation publiſhed from the Mountains.

ISAIAH xl. 9.

O Zion, that bringeſt good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains: O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength, lift it up, be not afraid: ſay unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

IT would be improper to propoſe an alteration, though a ſlight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my teſtimony to the great value of our Engliſh verſion, which I believe, in point of ſimplicity, ſtrength, and fidelity, is not likely to be excelled by a new tranſlation of the *whole* ſcripture. But there are, undoubtedly, particular paſſages, where a ſmall change in the expreſſion might render the ſenſe clearer, and be equally anſwerable to the original Hebrew or Greek. The addreſs of this verſe as it ſtands in the *Meſſiah* is, *O thou that tell'ſt good tidings*, &c. as the Biſhop of London has lately tranſlated it. Zion and Jeruſalem are conſidered by the prophet, not as bringing, but as receiving good tidings; and the publiſher of theſe good tidings is written with a feminine conſtruction. The ſenſe may be thus expreſſed, "Let her that bringeth good tidings to Jeruſalem and Zion, get up into the high mountains and lift up her voice." But the apoſtrophe is more animated. That it was the cuſtom in Iſrael for the women to publiſh and celebrate good news with ſongs and inſtruments, is well known. We have an early inſtance in the book

book of Exodus. When the Lord had delivered them from the power of Pharaoh, and they ſaw their enemies, who had ſo lately threatened them, dead upon the ſea-ſhore, *Miriam, the ſiſter of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam anſwered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed glorioufly; the horſe and his rider hath he thrown into the ſea* *. So afterwards, *when David returned from the ſlaughter of the Philiſtines, the women came out to meet him and Saul, with tabrets and inſtruments of muſic; and they anſwered one another as they played, Saul hath ſlain his thouſands, and David his ten thouſands* †. Thus likewiſe Deborah, in her ſublime ſong, repreſents the mother of Siſera ‡ and her women ſinging alternately, from a confident, though vain expectation, that Siſera would return a conqueror. In my text, the prophet, in proſpect of MESSIAH's appearance, ſpeaks of it as an event ſuited to excite a general joy. The goſpel (as the word imports) is good news, glad tidings indeed! the beſt news that ever reached the ears, or cheered the heart of man. The women are, therefore, called upon to proclaim his approach, on the tops of the hills and mountains, from whence they may be ſeen and heard to the greateſt advantage, for the ſpreading of the tidings throughout the whole country. Zion is as a beſieged city, but let her know that relief is at hand; ſay unto her, *Behold your God!* The Lord God will come with a ſtrong hand, or againſt the ſtrong one, and his people ſhall know him as their ſhepherd, full of care, kindneſs, and power.

The promiſe of *Immanuel, God with us*, is now to be ſpread like the morning from the tops of the mountains. The day is breaking, and this paſſage prepares for the following, *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is*

* Exod. xv. 20. 21. † 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. ‡ Judges v. 28, 29.

is come! The welcome news is to be diſperſed from Jeruſalem to Samaria, from Jew to Gentile, from one kingdom to another people, till all the nations and ends of the earth *ſhall ſee the ſalvation of God* *.

The cauſe of this exultation ariſes from the character of MESSIAH, compared with the deſign of his appearance, and this is anſwerable to the condition in which he finds mankind.

The deplorable ſtate of fallen man by nature is largely deſcribed both in the Old Teſtament and in the New. It may ſuffice to take notice of three principal features, which characteriſe our whole ſpecies, and apply to every individual of the race of Adam, until the grace of God, which bringeth ſalvation, affords relief. Theſe are guilt, alienation of heart, and miſery.

1. *Guilt.* All have ſinned. We are the creatures of God. He made us, and he preſerves us. Our life, faculties, and comforts, are all from him. He is, therefore, our great Lord, our ſupreme benefactor. Of courſe we belong to him. His we are, and not our own. It follows, that dependence, gratitude, ſubmiſſion, and obedience, are incumbent on us, as they muſt be upon all intelligent creatures, from the very nature of things. The relation which ſubſiſts between an infinitely wiſe and good Creator and his creatures, if capable of knowing him, neceſſarily implies this ſubjection. And the obligation is indiſſoluble. But we have evidently broken this law of our creation. We have violated the order of God's government. We have implicitly, if not formally, renounced our allegiance, diſowned his right over us, and ſet up for ourſelves. A dependent creature affecting independence; a worm preſuming upon its own power, making itſelf its own end; a rebel againſt the divine government, boaſting of morality and goodneſs, and truſting to his

* Pſal. xcviii. 3.

his own conduct to recommend him to the favour of his Maker; a being formed for immortality, propoſing his whole happineſs in things which he feels to be unſatisfying, knows to be uncertain, and from which he is conſcious he muſt, in a few years at moſt, be finally removed; theſe are ſolecisms which ſtrongly prove the depravity, degeneracy, and demerit of man. It is poſſible, that had we been wholly left to ourſelves, we ſhould never have been aware, while in this world, of the juſt and inevitable conſequences of our rebellion. Having loſt all right thoughts of God, and conceiving of him, as if he were altogether like ourſelves, we might have felt neither fear nor remorſe. But there is a revelation, by which we are informed of his determined purpoſe to avenge diſobedience, and to vindicate the honour of his government; and we are aſſured, that he is not an indifferent ſpectator of our oppoſition to his eſtabliſhed order. His juſtice and truth are engaged to puniſh tranſgreſſors, and our obnoxiouſneſs to puniſhment, is what we mean by *guilt*. If the ſcripture be true, there is no way of eſcape, unleſs he himſelf be pleaſed to appoint one. This he has done, and the declaration of this appointment is a part of the good tidings contained in my text. Proclaim it from the tops of the mountains, that there is forgiveneſs with him. Say unto Jeruſalem, Behold MESSIAH, Behold your God! He comes to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf *. He *can* do it, for he is God; and he *will* do it, for he has taken on him our nature for this very purpoſe †. *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the ſin of the world!*

2. *Alienation of mind.* Not only is it true that we have ſinned againſt the Lord, but a principle of averſion from him is deeply rooted in our hearts. Therefore one part of our natural character is, *haters*

* Heb. ix. 26. † 2 Cor. v. 21.

*ters of God**. This is thought a hard saying. Many who will admit that their conduct is blameable, and that they are not altogether what they ought to be, will by no means plead guilty to this charge. If they fall short of their duty, and in some instances transgress his commandment, they say, It is their infirmity; they are sorry, and hope to do better some time or other. However, they are willing to think that their hearts are tolerably good, they mean well, and are shocked at the idea of hating God. They rather presume that they love him, though they are not so careful to please him as they should be. I do not assert that we hate God under that character which our vain imaginations form of him. If we can persuade ourselves, in direct contradiction to the testimony of Scripture, that he is not strict to mark what is amiss; that he will dispense with the strictness of his law; that he will surely have mercy upon us, because we are not openly abandoned and profligate in our conduct; that he will accept of lip-worship in which the heart has no concern, reward us for actions in which we had no intention of pleasing him, permit us to love and serve the world with all our mind, and soul, and strength, while we live, and make us happy in another world, when we can live in this no longer—If we form such an image of God, it is too much like our own to provoke our enmity, for it is destitute of holiness, justice, and truth. But *the carnal mind is* and must be, *enmity against God*†, according to the character he has given of himself in his word. We have an inbred dislike to all his moral attributes, to the rule of his government, and to the methods of his grace. We cannot, that is, we will not, propose either his glory as our chief end, or his favour as our chief good. The proof is plain. The ends which we actually pursue, and the supposed good which we deliberately

* Rom. i. 30. † Rom. viii. 7.

ly prefer, are utterly inconſiſtent with the plan which he has preſcribed for us. His ways, though truly pleaſant in themſelves, appear unpleaſing to us, and we think we can plan better for ourſelves. We do not like *to retain God in our thoughts* *, which is a ſure ſign of enmity. Nay, this enmity is ſo ſtrong in us naturally, that we cannot bear others ſhould think more highly of God than we do, or be more attached to him than we are. This was the ground of the firſt murder. Abel loved God, and God was pleaſed to teſtify his approbation of Abel, and therefore Cain killed him †. This has been the great cauſe of the oppoſition and ill-treatment which the ſervants of God have met with from the men of the world in all ſucceeding ages: A cauſe which ſtill ſubſiſts, and will continue to operate upon poſterity yet unborn. Can we ſhow a ſtronger mark of diſlike to a perſon, than by hating all who profeſs a regard to him, and when that is the only cauſe of our reſentment? Such is the prevailing enmity againſt God. For how often do we ſee that when his grace enables a ſinner to forſake the ſpirit and practice of the world, his former friends are immediately offended; and, perhaps, thoſe of his own houſehold become his inveterate enemies?

But, *O thou that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice.* Say to poor ſinners, *behold your God!* He comes to take this enmity away! The croſs of Chriſt ſubdues it, when every other expedient has been found ineffectual. The heart, too hard to be ſoftened by a profuſion of temporal benefits, and too ſtout to be ſubdued by afflictions, is melted by the dying love of a Saviour, and by that diſcovery of the divine perfections which is exhibited in redemption. We have a ſtriking inſtance of this effect, in the caſe of Saul of Tarſus ‡. His miſguided conſcience, under the influence of prejudice, perſuaded him, *that*

* Rom. i. 28. † 1 John iii. 12. ‡ Acts ix. 1,—20.

that he ought to do many things againſt Jeſus of Nazareth. Inſtigated with rage, and not ſatisfied with the injuries he had offered to his diſciples at Jeruſalem, but *ſtill breathing out threatnings and ſlaughter*, he journeyed towards Damaſcus, deſigning to haraſs and perſecute them wherever he found them. In this temper of mind, he was ſuddenly arreſted on his way, by a light, and a voice from heaven. He fell to the ground. But Jeſus, whom he had ignorantly perſecuted, inſtructed him in the knowledge of his perſon and love, pardoned his ſin, and commiſſioned him to preach the faith he had laboured to deſtroy. How ſudden, how evident, how abiding was the change which then took place in his heart and in his conduct! From that moment he accounted *all things loſs and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord* *. Unwearied by labour and hardſhip, undiſmayed by oppoſition and danger, he ſpent the remainder of his life in the cauſe of his Maſter; and like Cæſar, accounting nothing done while any thing remained to do, his active and intrepid ſpirit was continually meditating new ſervices †. And, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place, he was always upon the wing to publiſh to his fellow-ſinners the grace and glory of him whom he had ſo long oppoſed, only becauſe he knew him not. And although the circumſtances attending the apoſtle's caſe were extraordinary, the caſe itſelf, as to the ſubſtance, is not ſingular. I truſt many perſons in this aſſembly have been the ſubjects of a like change. The doctrine which Paul preached, has enlightened your underſtandings, has inſpired you with hopes and deſires to which you were once ſtrangers, and given a new direction to the conduct and aims of your life. You were once afar off from God, but you are now brought nigh by the blood of Chriſt.

You

* Phil. iii. 8. † Acts xix. 21.

You once lived to yourſelves, but now you feel that you are no longer your own, and have devoted yourſelves to him who died to ſave you from the preſent evil world, and from the wrath to come.

3. *Miſery.* If we are guilty in the ſight of God, and alienated from him in our hearts, we muſt be miſerable. Guilt entails a burden, and a foreboding of evil upon the conſcience. And our alienation from the fountain of living waters *, compels us (for we are inſufficient to our own happineſs) to ſeek our reſources from broken ciſterns, and pits which will hold no water. Farther, ſin has filled the world with wo. The whole creation travails and groans; and natural evil is inſeparable from moral, as the ſhadow from the body. Though the earth be filled with tokens of the goodneſs, patience, and forbearance of God, it likewiſe abounds with marks of his diſpleaſure. I think we have ſufficient reaſon to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, and peſtilence, to ſin as their original and proper cauſe. We can hardly conceive, that if mankind had continued in that happy ſtate of love and obedience to God, in which our firſt parents were created, they would have been expoſed to ſuch calamities. When God, at the beginning, ſurveyed every thing that he had made, *behold it was very good* †. All was beauty and harmony, till ſin introduced diſorder and a curſe. But far worſe than what we ſuffer immediately from the providence of God, are the evils which we bring upon ourſelves and upon each other. The dreadful conſequences of war, rapine, diſcord, hatred, ambition, avarice, and intemperance, furniſh part of every page in the mournful hiſtory of human life, and are felt in every nation, city, village, and family. Want, cares, and diſeaſes, prey upon individuals. Diſappointment, diſſatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of ſpirit, are experienced by perſons of every rank, and in every

* Jer. ii. 13. † Gen. i. 31.

ry ſtage of human life. How much more deſirable would it be, were it not for the hope of the goſpel, to ſhare with the brute creation, than to bear the name of man in his fallen ſtate! The brutes have few wants; their propenſities, and the means of gratifying them, are ſuited to their natures, adapted to their powers, and conducive to the preſervation of the ſpecies. They neither regret the paſt, nor tremble under apprehenſions of the future. It is far otherwiſe with man. His boaſted pleaſures end with a ſting, and often he cannot bear his own reflections on them. He ſuffers almoſt as much from imaginary fears, as from real afflictions. The more he poſſeſſes, the more are the ſources of his anxieties multiplied and enlarged. And after having been long wearied with a train of mortifications, pains, and inquietudes, he muſt at laſt, however unwilling, yield to that ſtroke of death, the thought of which, when ſtrongly realiſed to his mind, was always ſufficient to embitter the happieſt hours of his life.

But publiſh the glad tidings from the mountains, and let the joyful ſound diffuſe over the plain.—*Your God cometh.* MESSIAH eſtabliſhes a new, a ſpiritual kingdom upon the earth, and his happy ſubjects are freed from the miſery in which they were involved. They commit all their concerns to him, and he manages for them. Their fears are removed, their irregular deſires corrected, and all that is really good for them, is ſecured to them by his love, promiſe, and care. Afflictions ſtill await them, but they are ſanctified. To them the nature of afflictions is changed. They are appointments graciouſly deſigned for their advantage. Their croſſes, no leſs than their comforts, are tokens of God's favour*; they have them only becauſe their preſent

* Heb. xii. 6, 7

ſituation requires diſcipline, and they could not be ſo well without them. They are aſſured of ſupport under them *, and a final deliverance out of them all: for there is a happy hour approaching, when all their troubles ſhall ceaſe, and they ſhall enter upon a ſtate of eternal, uninterrupted, inconceivable joy †.

For theſe purpoſes the Son of God was revealed. The prophets ſaw his day afar off, and proclaimed his approach.—*Thy God cometh!* Though truly a man, he is truly God. Neither man nor angel could remove our guilt, communicate to us a ſpiritual life, relieve us from miſery, and give us ſtable peace in a changing world, hope and triumph in death, and eternal life beyond it. But his wiſdom and power are infinite, and his purpoſe unchangeable. He would not have invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him, if he was not able and determined to give them reſt. None that ſeek him are diſappointed, or ſent empty away: A ſufficient proof that his compaſſion, his bounty, his fulneſs are properly divine. Therefore the apoſtle, ſpeaking of the riches of his grace, uſes the epithet, *unſearchable* ‡. His treaſury of life and ſalvation is inexhauſtible, like a boundleſs, ſhoreleſs, bottomleſs ocean; like the ſun, which having cheered the ſucceſſive generations of mankind with his beams, ſtill ſhines with undiminiſhed luſtre, is ſtill the fountain of light, and has always a ſufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes in the ſame inſtant.

Does the language of my text cauſe joy to ſpring up in your hearts? or is it nothing to you? If you heard the *Meſſiah*, you were, perhaps, affected by the muſic of the paſſage; how much are you to be pitied, if you are hitherto unaffected by the ſentiment!

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Iſ. lx. 20. Rev. xxi. 4. ‡ Epheſ. iii. 8.

ment! Yet once more, hear,—*Thy God cometh!* He did come in the fulneſs of time, according to the prophecy, and the word of prophecy aſſures us, that he will come again. *Behold he cometh in the clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo that pierced him* *.—*Prepare to meet thy God* †.

* Rev. i. 7. † Amos iv. 12.

SERMON VII.

The Morning Light.

ISAIAH lx. 1.—3.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

ONE strong internal proof that the Bible is a divine revelation, may be drawn from the subject-matter; and particularly that it is the book, and the only book, which teaches us to think highly and honourably of God. I say, the only book, for there is no right knowledge of God where the Bible is not known. What is the Jupiter of Homer, compared with the God of Israel, as he is represented to us by his servants the prophets? And if the Heathen philosophers, in some detached passages, have sentiments not altogether unworthy of him, history honestly tells us how they obtained them. They travelled, and they are generally said to have travelled into Phœnicia or Egypt, to the confines of that people who alone thought rightly of God, because to them only he had made himself known by a revelation. If such a description as we have in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the twelfth verse to the end, had been known only of late years, recovered, we will suppose, out of the ruins of Herculaneum, there is little doubt but it would have engaged

engaged the attention and admiration of the learned world. For the moſt admired writings of antiquity, upon a candid compariſon, are unſpeakably inferior to it. The inimitable ſublimity of the prophets is natural, juſt, and unforced, and flows from the grandeur of their ſubjects, becauſe they were influenced by him who alone can ſpeak worthily of himſelf.

A ſong ſo vaſt, a theme ſo high,
Calls for the voice that tun'd the ſky.

With them, the whole compaſs of the creation is but as duſt upon the balance, in reſpect of the great Creator. His purpoſe is fate, his voice is power. He ſpeaks, and it is done. Thus he called the univerſe into being; and thus, as the great Lord and Proprietor of all, he ſtill maintains and governs it, directing the frame of nature, and every particular event and contingence, to the promoting of his own glory, the laſt and higheſt end of all his works.

The principal of theſe is, the exhibition of his perfections in the perſon of his Son. The prophecies we have already conſidered announce this event, with a gradual increaſe of clearneſs and preciſion, as the period of accompliſhment is ſuppoſed to draw nigh. We lately heard the command to proclaim his approach from the hills and the tops of the mountains. Here the prophet begins to contemplate the effects of his actual appearance. The earth is conſidered as involved in a ſtate of groſs darkneſs; but the ſun, the Sun of Righteouſneſs is about to ariſe, and to fill it, by his beams, with light, life, and glory. Theſe effects, indeed, will not extend to all, for many will love darkneſs rather than light. But he will not ſhine in vain. There will be a people prepared to receive him, and to rejoice in his light. They ſhall ariſe as from ſleep, as from the grave, and his light reflected upon them ſhall cauſe them to ſhine likewiſe. Darkneſs ſhall ſtill cover

thoſe who reject him; yea, their darkneſs will be increaſed. But the glory of the Lord ſhall be ſeen upon all who believe, and their numbers, from age to age, ſhall be enlarged. Nations ſhall come to him, and kings ſhall be ſubſervient to the ſpreading of his kingdom. Such is the ſcope of the paſſage before us. I ſhall briefly conſider a few of the leading particulars contained in it.

I. As the ſun is the ſource of light to the natural world, ſo is MESSIAH to the moral and ſpiritual world. Light, and its oppoſite, darkneſs, are figuratively uſed in Scripture. The latter is applied to a ſtate of ignorance, ſin, and miſery, as in the following texts. *He that walketh in darkneſs, knoweth not whither he goeth* *. *If we ſay that we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie, and do not the truth* †. *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth* ‡. The former, therefore, ſignifies true knowledge, holineſs, and happineſs. *Ye were ſometime darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light* ‖. *When I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light unto me* §. *Light is ſown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart* ¶. I ſelect but one inſtance of each kind; an attentive reader of the ſcripture will meet with many expreſſions of a like import. But there is likewiſe an intermediate ſtate. Light advancing from the early dawn to the perfect day. This twilight, no leſs than day-light, is from the ſun. Such was the ſtate of the Old-Teſtament church. MESSIAH was the ſource of their knowledge, hope, and joy; but he was (if I may ſo ſpeak) below the horizon, as to them.—Though believers, under that diſpenſation, were a people ſaved of the Lord, they were trained up under types and ſhadows, were influenced by a ſpirit of comparative

* John xii. 35. † 1 John i. 6 ‡ Matth. xxv. 30.
‖ Eph. v. 8. § Micah vii. 8. ¶ Pſal. xcvii. 11.

comparative bondage and diſtance, like children under age, and rather longed for, than actually poſſeſſed the gracious liberty which the children of God enjoy under the goſpel. But the ſun aroſe, and the ſhadows vaniſhed, when the Son of God incarnate dwelt and converſed with men, honoured his temple with his perſonal preſence, and ſuperſeded all the Levitical ſacrifices, by the one offering of himſelf upon the croſs. *The law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.* But more eſpecially we date the beginning of his viſible kingdom from the day of Pentecoſt, which followed his aſcenſion. Then he ſignally beſtowed the gifts, which, as Mediator, he had received for men, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, authoriſed and qualified his ſervants to go forth and preach ſalvation in his name. Then the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken away, *and his righteouſneſs was openly ſhown in the ſight of the Heathen.* Abraham, Moſes, Elijah, and other ſervants of God, had been highly favoured and highly honoured; but we are aſſured by our Lord himſelf, that none born of woman had been greater than John his fore-runner—and yet he added, *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*, that is, in the New-Teſtament or goſpel church, *is greater than he* *. The apoſtles were happy in the peculiar privilege of attending on his perſon; yet he told them, *It is expedient for you that I go away* †. There were ſtill greater privileges depending upon the influence of the promiſed Comforter, who was to abide with the church for ever. By the power of this Holy Spirit, the Lord is now preſent with all his miniſters and people in every place, whether retired in ſecret from the view of men, or aſſembled together in his name ‡; and though the great events upon which their hopes are

 founded,

* Matt. xi. 11. † John xvi. 7. ‡ Matt. vi. 6. xviii. 20. xxviii. 20.

founded, his life, paſſion, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, took place long ago, he ſo realizes the declaration of them in his word to their hearts, that they are no leſs aſſured of what they read, than the apoſtles, who ſaw him with their own eyes. Thus the goſpel-ſtate is a diſpenſation of light. The Sun is riſen with life and healing in his beams, and they who have the eyes of their underſtanding opened, enjoy a bright and marvellous day. They ſee, admire, adore, rejoice, and love.

II. The ſubjects of MESSIAH's kingdom, the living members of his church, are ſo irradiated by him, that they ſhine likewiſe, as the moon ſhines, but with a borrowed light, derived from the ſun. *Beholding, in this glaſs, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory* *, according to the meaſure and growth of their faith. Two points may be obſerved under this head.

1. *The fact,* that they do thus ſhine. Though they were once darkneſs, they are now light †. A dark, ignorant, wicked, ſelfiſh Chriſtian, is a contradiction in terms. There *may be* ſuch, there *are* too many ſuch, amongſt thoſe who make profeſſion of the name of Chriſt; but they who truly know him *walk in the light, as he is in the light.* They have knowledge, *a good underſtanding* ‡. Perhaps the greater part of real Chriſtians have little acquaintance with the literature and ſcience of the world; their moral capacities may be weak, and not improved by education; they may be in the eſteem of men, as they are in their own, but babes; yet they know more than the wiſeſt philoſophers who are deſtitute of the grace of God. They know themſelves, they know the Lord, they know the evil of ſin, and the way of ſalvation; what their proper happineſs conſiſts in, and how it is to be obtained. They have learned to endure affliction, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good. They have

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Eph. v. 8. ‡ Pſal. cxi. 10.

have attained a juſt ſenſe of the vanity of the world, and the importance of eternity. They are inſtructed to be contented and uſeful in their ſtations, to diſcharge their duties in relative life with propriety, and to meet death with comfort. In all theſe particulars, many who have dazzling talents, and are celebrated for abilities and endowments, are miſerably at a loſs. True believers are conformed to the ſpirit and temper of their Saviour, and therefore are different and diſtinguiſhed from the world around them. And they have, at leaſt, the beginnings of true peace and ſolid happineſs, in communion with him whom they ſerve.

2. *The cauſe.* They ſhine wholly by his light. If their own words may be taken, the proof of this is eaſy. They are free to confeſs that they are only wiſe by his wiſdom, ſtrong by his power working in them, and that without him they *have not ſufficiency to think a good thought* *. Experience has taught them that they cannot ſtand unleſs he upholds them, nor watch unleſs he watcheth with them, nor be ſafe or happy a ſingle day, without freſh communications from him. But this their experience and acknowledgment is the expreſs and current doctrine of ſcripture. There is a real, though myſtical, union between Chriſt and his people. He is the vine †, they the branches: he is their head, they the members of his body. They dwell in him by faith, he dwells in them by his Spirit. He is their root and their life; all their ſprings are in him, and it is out of his *fulneſs that they receive* ‡. Therefore the apoſtle ſays, *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me* ‖; *I can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening me* §. And our Lord himſelf, who comforted Paul with that promiſe, *My grace is ſufficient for thee*, appriſed all his followers of their entire dependence upon him, by ſaying, *Without me ye can*

* 2 Cor. iii 5. † John xv. i. ‡ John i. 16. ‖ Gal. ii. 20. § 2 Cor. xii. 9.

do nothing *. The language of the Old Teſtament is to the ſame purport, *They looked unto him, and were enlightened* †. *In the Lord* Jehovah *I have righteouſneſs and ſtrength* ‡. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength* ‖. Thus things are conſtituted and conducted, *that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord* §.

III. They who wilfully refuſe and turn from this light, do thereby involve themſelves in double darkneſs, and become more infatuated and wicked than thoſe to whom the light has not been propoſed. Their evils, likewiſe, are more aggravated than they would have been if the light had not viſited them. Thus our Lord, MESSIAH, ſpeaks of the Jews, *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin; but now they have no cloke for their ſin* **. And again, *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which ſee not might ſee, and that they which ſee might be made blind* ††. He came to make the ignorant wiſe unto ſalvation; but they who, from a proud conceit of their own wiſdom and ſufficiency, diſdain his inſtruction, being left to themſelves, give abundant evidence, that the light they boaſt of is but groſs and palpable darkneſs. The groſſeſt errors, the greateſt obduracy of heart, the moſt extreme profaneneſs of ſpirit, and the moſt abominable wickedneſs in practice, may be expected, and will certainly be found where the goſpel is deſpiſed.

It is evident, that the morality which is ſo highly admired by the Chriſtian world, and ſet in oppoſition to the goſpel of Chriſt, is much leaner and more ſcanty than the morality of the heathens. I ſpeak of the idea only; for neither have the heathens of old, nor of the preſent day, acted up to their own rules. But I do not heſitate to affirm, that none of our modern

* John xv. 5. † Pſal. xxxiv. 5. ‡ Iſ. xlv. 24. ‖ Iſ. xl. 29.
§ 1 Cor. i. 29, 31. ** John xv. 22. †† John ix. 39.

dern moraliſts who have diſowned the goſpel revelation, have given us a ſyſtem of morality equal to that of Tully the Pagan. Many of the heathens acknowledged the deſirableneſs and neceſſity of revelation; though infidels, born in a Chriſtian land, think it a high mark of their wiſdom to deſpiſe it; and avowed Atheiſts, that is, men who deny either the being or the providence of God, or the obligations mankind are under to obey him, are ſeldom to be met with but in countries where the Bible is known. The heart muſt have obſtinately and repeatedly reſiſted light and conviction, before it can ordinarily proceed to theſe dreadful lengths. But while the blind ſtumble in the noon of day, MESSIAH'S people ſhall walk in confidence and peace *, and ſhine as lights in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation †.

IV. The third verſe of this chapter foretells, and therefore ſecures, the converſion of the Gentiles or heathens. The times and the ſeaſons are in the diſpoſal of God, but the ſcriptures muſt be fulfilled. Much was done in the firſt age of Chriſtianity. A ſingle inſtrument, the Apoſtle Paul, as he himſelf informs us, preached the faith, which he formerly laboured to deſtroy, *from Jeruſalem round about to Illyricum* ‡, and probably much farther afterwards. And the Lord, who appointed him to this ſervice, accompanied his meſſage with his own power; ſo that he had ſignal ſucceſs, in turning men from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols, to ſerve the living and true God; and in planting the goſpel, and gathering churches in every province. The goſpel found an early reception at Rome, which facilitated its ſpread into the different parts of the Roman empire. And we have reaſon to believe it was introduced into our iſland in a few years after our Lord's aſcenſion. And though what was called the converſion of heathen nations in ſome following ages, went

* Pſal. lxxxix. 15, 16. † Phil. ii. 15. ‡ Rom. xv. 19.

little farther than to prevail on them to aſſume the name of Chriſtians, and left them, conſidered as nations, as deſtitute of the ſpirit and bleſſings of Chriſtianity as it found them; yet I cannot doubt, that wherever the New Teſtament, and the ſufferings of MESSIAH, were known, ſome individuals at leaſt experienced a real and ſaving change. And we are warranted to hope for ſtill greater things; for a time when the groſs darkneſs, which as yet covers a great part of the world, ſhall be diſpelled; and the Redeemer's kingdom, ſpoken of by Daniel the prophet, *as a ſtone cut out without hands, ſhall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth* *. But this pleaſing ſubject will come more directly under our conſideration hereafter.

V. The call in my text may be taken in a general ſenſe, like that of the apoſtle, *Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light* †. Natural light requires eyes to perceive it. It would be abſurd to point out the beauties of an extenſive proſpect to a blind man. To him the face of nature preſents only a univerſal blank. But the light of the goſpel not only diſcovers the moſt important objects to thoſe who can ſee, but has a marvellous efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. It is the appointed inſtrument of Divine Power for this purpoſe. In vain would be the labour and expectation of the huſbandman, if God did not afford the rain, and the ſnow, to water the earth, and the enlivening influences of the ſun, to draw forth the tender blade, and to ripen the corn. Equally unſucceſsful would the preaching of the goſpel prove to ſinful men, though in itſelf it be eminently the truth and wiſdom of God, exactly ſuited to their ſtate, and of the higheſt importance to their welfare, if he had not promiſed that his word, where ſimply and faithfully delivered in dependence upon his bleſſing, ſhall not be

* Dan. ii. 35. † Eph. v. 14.

be ſpoken in vain, but ſhall certainly accompliſh the end for which he has ſent it *. This promiſe, together with the experience of its truth in our own caſe, and our knowledge of its uniform effects in every age and country where the doctrine of the croſs has been preached, encourages miniſters to perſevere in publiſhing the glad tidings, in defiance of all the oppoſition and diſappointments we meet with. We lament, but cannot wonder, that the goſpel is ſo generally neglected. As a diſpenſation of grace, it offends the pride of man; as a diſpenſation of holineſs, it contradicts his deſires and paſſions. His ſpirit is degraded, his heart is pre-engaged, he loves the preſent world, and has no more taſte or inclination for a life of communion with God here, and ſuch a heaven as the ſcripture propoſes hereafter, than the beaſts of the field. But the Lord has ſaid, *I will work, and who ſhall let it* †? When he is pleaſed to clothe the word preached with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to apply it to the conſcience, it is quick, powerful, penetrating, and irreſiſtible as lightning; it conveys a voice, which the deaf, yea, the dead, muſt hear: it forces a light upon the mind which cannot be evaded. Then things are ſeen as they are. The nature and deſert of ſin is apprehended, and then the goſpel is found to be the only balm for a diſtreſſed and wounded conſcience. Therefore, having the Lord's command and promiſe, we are not to be diſcouraged by the careleſſneſs or obſtinacy of thoſe who know not what they do. We are aware of the difficulty, yea, the impoſſibility of ſucceeding in our endeavour to ſave the ſouls of our hearers, if we had only to depend upon our own arguments or earneſtneſs. We are not to reaſon, but to obey. Our buſineſs is to deliver our meſſage, and in our happier moments to water it with our prayers and tears. When we have done this we can do no more. The event muſt be left

* Iſ. lv. 10, 11. † Iſ. xliii. 13.

left with him in whose name we speak. We must not suppress nor disguise what we are commanded to declare; nor wilfully make any additions of our own, to accommodate it to the taste or prejudice of our hearers *. Let those preach smooth things who will venture to answer at the great tribunal, for the souls that have miscarried under their ministry; *we dare not.* Let those be ashamed of the gospel of Christ †, who feel no obligations to him for his dying love; *we cannot*, and by the grace of God, *we will not.* We will glory in it. *God forbid that we should glory in any thing* else ‡! Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to preach and prophecy to dry bones, and he who sends us can cause the dry bones to live. *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord* ||. The word of his salvation is sent to you. *The Lord is risen indeed! Arise, shine, for your light is come.* In his name we proclaim pardon and peace to all who will seek him. But seek him to-day, while it is called to-day, to-morrow is not yours. Seek him now, while he may be found. Harden not your hearts. Tremble, *lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should finally come short of it* §.

* 2 Cor. iv. 2. † Rom. i. 16. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.
|| Ezek. xxxvii. 4. § Heb. iv. 1.

S E R.

SERMON VIII.

The Sun rising upon a dark World.

ISAIAH ix. 2.

The people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the ſhadow of death, upon them hath the light ſhined.

CONTRASTS are ſuited to illuſtrate and ſtrengthen the impreſſion of each other. The happineſs of thoſe, who, by faith in MESSIAH, are brought into a ſtate of peace, liberty, and comfort, is greatly enhanced and heightened by the conſideration of that previous ſtate of miſery in which they once lived, and of the greater miſery to which they were juſtly expoſed. They are not only made *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light* *, but they have been delivered from the powers of darkneſs. Thus while they have communion with God as a Father, they contemplate their privilege with a greater pleaſure, than they probably could do if they had never known a difference. They remember a time when they were *afar off, without hope and without God in the world*; and they remember how careleſsly they then trifled upon the brink of deſtruction. In this deplorable and dangerous ſituation they were *found of the Lord, when they ſought him not* †. He convinced, humbled, and pardoned them, and brought them near to himſelf, into a ſtate of adoption and communion by the blood of Jeſus. The admiration, gratitude, and love, which they feel for this undeſerved grace, gives them a more lively ſenſe of the

* Col. i. 12, 13. † Iſ. lxv. 1.

the bleſſings they enjoy. Yea, the thought of what they have been redeemed from (of which they will then have a much clearer perception than at preſent) will add to their joys in heaven, and inſpire ſuch a ſong of praiſe as will be peculiar to themſelves, and in which the holy angels, who never felt the ſtings of guilt, nor taſted the ſweetneſs of pardoning mercy, will not be able to join them. They are accordingly repreſented, in the prophetical viſion, as ſtanding neareſt to the throne, and uniting in the nobleſt ſtrains of praiſe to him who ſitteth upon it *; while the ſurrounding angels can only take part in the chorus, and admire and adore, when they behold the brighteſt diſplays of the glory of the wonder-working God, manifeſted in his love to worthleſs, helpleſs ſinners.

Theſe oppoſite ideas are joined in my text. The people who are ſpoken of as rejoicing in a great light, were, till this light aroſe and ſhone upon them, *in darkneſs*; walking, ſitting, living in darkneſs, and in the land of the ſhadow of death. That this paſſage refers to MESSIAH, we have a direct proof. The evangeliſt † refers it expreſsly to him, and points out the time and manner of its literal accompliſhment. I ſhall firſt conſider the literal ſenſe and completion of the prophecy, and then ſhew how fitly it applies to the ſtate of mankind at large, and to the happy effects of the goſpel of ſalvation; which, by the bleſſing of God, has been the inſtrument of bringing multitudes of many nations, peoples, and languages, out of a ſtate of groſs *darkneſs, into marvellous light* ‡.

I. Hebrew words (like many in our own language) have often more than one ſignification. But only one ſenſe can be expreſſed in a verſion. And therefore interpreters and tranſlators frequently differ. Which of the different words, uſed to expreſs the meaning of the ſame original term, is moſt happily choſen, may be ſometimes decided by the context. The

* Rev. v. 9.—12. † Matt. iv. 15, 16. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

The two words, in the firſt verſe of this chapter, rendered *lightly afflicted* and *grievouſly afflicted*, ſignify likewiſe, the one to think lightly of, to account vile; and the other, to honour, to render honourable, and glorious. Both theſe words occur in one verſe, and are uſed in theſe ſenſes, in the Lord's meſſage to Eli, *Them that honour me I will honour, and they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteemed* *. Had the ſame words been thus rendered in the paſſage before us, the ſenſe of both verſes would, I think, have been more plain, connected, and conſiſtent to the following purport, agreeable to the tranſlation given by Vitringa, and the preſent Biſhop of London. "Nevertheleſs there ſhall not be dimneſs [or darkneſs] as in the time of her vexation or diſtreſs. He formerly debaſed [made light or vile] the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, even [the land] by the way of the ſea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [For] The people that walked in darkneſs have ſeen a great light," &c. —Such was the afflicted and low ſtate of Galilee previous to the coming of MESSIAH; ſuch was the exaltation and honour it derived from his appearance.

1. The land allotted to the tribes of Iſſachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, was chiefly included in the province, which, upon a ſubſequent diviſion of the country, obtained the name of Galilee. The northern part of it, the inheritance of Naphtali, was the boundary or frontier towards Syria, and had been frequently vexed and afflicted, when the ſins of Iſrael brought the armies of their enemies upon them, as frontier countries uſually ſuffer moſt in times of invaſion and war. Particularly this part of the land, called Galilee of the Gentiles, was the firſt, and moſt immediately expoſed to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileſer and Sennacherib. And as the people there were likewiſe more mixed with foreigners, and at the greateſt

* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

greateſt diſtance from the capital, Jeruſalem, on theſe accounts Galilee was lightly eſteemed by the Jews themſelves. They thought *no prophet could ariſe in Galilee* *. It even prejudiced Nathanael againſt the firſt report he received of Jeſus as MESSIAH, that he lived, and was generally ſuppoſed (by thoſe who were content to be governed by popular rumour, without enquiring attentively for themſelves) to have been born in Galilee. He aſked, with an appearance of ſurpriſe, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* † They were accounted a rude, unpoliſhed, provincial people. And therefore, when Peter would have denied any acquaintance with his Lord, he was diſcovered to be a Galilean ‡ by his dialect and manner of ſpeech.

2. This deſpiſed and leaſt valued part of the land of Iſrael, was the principal ſcene of MESSIAH's life and miniſtry, inſomuch that, as I have obſerved, he was ſuppoſed to have been born there; a miſtake which his enemies induſtriouſly ſupported and made the moſt of: for thoſe who could perſuade themſelves that it was ſo in fact, would think themſelves juſtified in rejecting his claim; it being one undeniable mark of MESSIAH, given by the Prophet Micah, *that he was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah* ‖. He was, however, brought up at Nazareth, and lived for a time in Capernaum, towns in Galilee; but both of ſo little repute, that had they not been connected with his hiſtory, it is not probable that their names would have been tranſmitted to poſterity.

3 But by his reſidence there, Galilee was honoured and ennobled. He himſelf declared, that on this account, *Chorazin, Bethſaida, and Capernaum* (though probably none of them were more than inconſiderable fiſhing towns) *were exalted even to heaven* §. Thoſe were highly privileged places which our Lord condeſcended

* John vii. 52. † John i. 46. ‡ Mark xiv. 70.
‖ Micah v. 2. § Matt. xi. 21,—23.

condeſcended to viſit in perſon; ſo likewiſe are thoſe places where he is pleaſed to ſend his goſpel. I have obſerved formerly, and I make no apology for repeating a truth ſo very important, and ſo little attended to, that *the glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God* *, when faithfully preached, and thankfully received and improved, renders an obſcure village more honourable, and of more real conſequence, than the metropolis of a great empire, where this light ſhineth not. For what are the *dark places of the earth* †, however celebrated for numbers and opulence, for the monuments of ambition and arts, but habitations of cruelty, infatuation, and miſery!

4. Though Galilee was favoured with the ſcripture, and with ſynagogue-worſhip, and the inhabitants were a people who profeſſed to know the God of Iſrael, it was a land of darkneſs at the time of MESSIAH's appearance. Though they were not idolaters, ignorance prevailed among them. The law and the prophets were read in the ſynagogues; but we may believe to little good purpoſe, while they were under the direction of perverſe teachers, who ſubſtituted the traditions of men for the commands of God. The ſingle circumſtance of keeping herds of ſwine, as the Gaderenes did, ſeems a proof, that the law of Moſes was but little regarded by them. They, as well as the people of Judea, were under the guidance of the Scribes and Phariſees in their religious concerns, who were, if I may uſe a modern phraſe, the clergy of that time; and theſe, we are aſſured by him who knew their hearts, were generally corrupted; *blind, leaders of the blind.* Yet they were held in ignorant admiration, and implicitly ſubmitted to. From the character of the public miniſters of religion, we may, without great danger of miſtake, infer the character of the people who are pleaſed and ſatisfied with their miniſtrations. *As the diſciple*

* 1 Tim. i. 11. † Pſal. lxxiv. 20.

diſciple cannot, ordinarily, *be expected to be ſuperior to his Maſter* *; the religion of the ſcribes may be taken as a ſtandard of that of the Galileans, who were inſtructed by them: Yet theſe were the people among whom MESSIAH chiefly converſed; ſo that his enemies ſtyled him a Galilean, and a Nazarene, as a mark of reproach and contempt. Many of his apoſtles, perhaps the moſt of them, were Galileans likewiſe. *He ſeeth not as men ſeeth* †. The moſt of his immediate followers while upon earth, were ſuch as men deſpiſed, on account of their ſituation, rank, or callings; publicans and ſinners, fiſhermen and Galileans. This was, among other reaſons, for the encouragement of the poor, the deſtitute, the deſpiſed, the miſerable, and the guilty, in ſucceeding ages, who ſhould deſire to put their truſt in his name, and to implore his mercy. To thoſe who received him, he was the light, the true light; he relieved them from the ignorance, wickedneſs, and diſtreſs, in which he found them. They, on their parts, bore teſtimony to him. They ſaw and acknowledged his glory. They felt his power, and devoted themſelves to his ſervice. Thus much for the literal ſenſe.

II. But this prophecy is not to be reſtrained to the firſt and more immediate ſeaſon of its accompliſhment. The Lord ſpeaks thus of MESSIAH in another place, *It is a light thing that thou ſhouldeſt be my ſervant, to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my ſalvation to the ends of the earth* ‡. And there are many declarations of a like import. He is ſtill *the light of the world* ‖, though no longer viſible and converſant with men. By the influence and power of his Spirit, he is ſtill preſent wherever his goſpel is known. This his word of grace and truth he ſends where he pleaſes,

* Luke vi. 40. † 1 Sam. xvi. 7. ‡ Iſ. xlix. 6. ‖ John viii. 12.

pleaſes, and with a diſcrimination not unlike that which he obſerved when he was upon earth. The goſpel is preached to the poor. Courts and palaces are ſeldom favoured with it. While he paſſes by many great cities, many habitations of the wiſe and wealthy, he is known in villages and cottages. His condeſcenſion and favour to thoſe who are unnoticed by the world, cannot be too highly extolled. That the others are excluded from the ſame benefits, is more properly to be aſcribed to their obſtinacy than to his will. They exclude themſelves. *He ſtands at the door and knocks* *. His word is within their reach; his miniſters are within their call. They might eaſily enjoy every mean and help which the goſpel provides for ſinners if they pleaſed, but they do not pleaſe. They are either engaged in a round of ſenſual pleaſure, or engroſſed by ſtudies and purſuits, which poſſeſs their hearts, and fill up their thoughts and time, ſo that they have neither leiſure nor inclination to attend to the things which pertain to their peace. Inſtead of inviting his goſpel to them, they too frequently employ their power and influence to diſcountenance, and, if poſſible, to ſuppreſs it. They have their choice. The great and the gay will not receive his meſſage; it is therefore ſent to the poor, and to the wretched, and they will hear it. Yet as he viſited Jeruſalem in perſon, and taught there, ſo London likewiſe is favoured with the light of his goſpel. But alas, *How few believe the report?* They who do, experience the change deſcribed in my text. Their darkneſs is changed into marvellous light.

Mankind, till enlightened by the word and ſpirit of grace, are truly in a ſtate of darkneſs. Thick darkneſs is a vail which conceals from us, not only diſtant, but the neareſt objects. A man in the dark cannot perceive either friend or enemy; he may be in

* Rev. iii. 20.

in great danger, yet think himſelf in ſafety; or if he thinks himſelf in danger, be unable to take any ſtep for his preſervation, from a want of light. Thus, though God be our maker and preſerver, though *in him we live, move, and have our being*, though we are ſurrounded with his preſence, and proofs of his wiſdom and goodneſs are before us wherever we turn our eyes, yet we live without him in the world. Equally ignorant we are of ourſelves, of the proper happineſs of our nature, or how it is to be attained. We know neither the cauſe, nor the cure, nor the conſequences of our proneneſs to cleave to the duſt, and of placing our affection on inadequate and unſatisfying objects.

And if we ſuppoſe a perſon awakened to a conviction of the evil of ſin, and to underſtand that nothing leſs than the favour of God can make a rational and immortal creature happy, ſtill without the goſpel he *would be in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death*. His caſe may be compared to that of a perſon ſhipwrecked upon ſome deſert, inhoſpitable coaſt, ſuffering great horrors and anxiety, from his expoſedneſs to periſh by hunger, by enemies, or wild beaſts—who, if he ſaw, at no very great diſtance, an iſland, and was, by ſome means, informed and aſſured, that iſland was the ſeat of ſafety, plenty, and pleaſure; and that if he was once there, his dangers would all ceaſe, and his utmoſt wiſhes be ſatisfied; ſtill, if there were neither bridge, nor boat, nor any means by which he might arrive thither, to know that happineſs was ſo near him, yet inacceſſible to him, would but aggravate his miſery, and make his deſpair more emphatically pungent. Miſerable indeed, muſt we be, if we clearly perceived that only he, whoſe creatures we are, can make us happy; and that as ſinners we have forfeited his favour, and are utterly incapable of regaining it, if we were left under theſe views without any hope of relief. Such muſt

muſt have been our ſituation ſooner or later, if *God, who is rich in mercy*, had not himſelf provided the means of reconciliation. For though a hope of pardon is eaſily taken up by thoſe who are ignorant of the holineſs of God and the malignity of ſin, yet nothing but a declaration from himſelf, that there is forgiveneſs with him, can give peace to a truly awakened conſcience. But Jeſus diſpels this darkneſs, and *brings life and immortality to light by the goſpel.* For,

1. The office and agency of the Holy Spirit, ſo abſolutely neceſſary to make us duly ſenſible, either of our danger, or of the poſſibility of eſcaping it, is entirely the effect of his mediation. The ſoul of man, originally formed to be the temple of the living God, when defiled by ſin, was juſtly forſaken by its great inhabitant; and ſince the fall, anſwers the prophetical deſcription given of Babylon. *It is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul ſpirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird* *. If we aſk, as with good reaſon we may, How can the wiſe and holy God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and with whom evil cannot dwell, return to his ſanctuary thus polluted and profaned? an anſwer is afforded in that gracious promiſe, *I will ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean: from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols, will I cleanſe you; and I will take away the ſtony heart, and I will give you an heart of fleſh, and* (in order to this) *I will put my Spirit within you* †. But the ſource of this mercy is his ſovereign love and purpoſe, to give the ſeed of the woman, his only Son, to be the Mediator of ſinners. By his atonement, to be manifeſted in due time, but which had a virtual influence from the beginning, the Holy Spirit returned to dwell with men.

2. His obedience unto death, when revealed by the

* Rev. xviii. 2. † Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.

the Holy Spirit to the enlightened conſcience, affords a clear and ſatisfactory diſcovery of reconciliation with God: it ſhews, that on his part every hindrance to the free exerciſe of mercy is thereby removed, the honour of his law vindicated, and the demands of his juſtice anſwered. On our parts, by opening a door of hope, it removes that enmity and obduracy of heart, which are nouriſhed by a conſciouſneſs of guilt, and a ſecret foreboding of deſerved puniſhment. But when the dignity of the Redeemer's perſon, the cauſes, nature, and deſign of his ſufferings are underſtood, emotions of admiration, love, and gratitude, till then unknown, are felt, and obſtinate ſinners *are made a willing people in this day of divine power*.

3. The doctrine of the croſs pours a light upon every ſubject and circumſtance in which we are concerned. It enlarges the mind, and forms the judgment and taſte, agreeable to the ſtandard of truth, and the real nature of things. It rectifies thoſe prejudices and prepoſſeſſions which diſpoſe us to miſtake *good for evil, and evil for good* *, to purſue trifles with earneſtneſs, and to trifle with things of the greateſt importance. In Jeſus Chriſt crucified, *all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge* are at once both hidden and exhibited. This object, the holy angels, whoſe knowledge of the wonders in creation, without doubt, greatly ſurpaſſes our conceptions, inceſſantly contemplate with delight, as affording the brighteſt diſplays *of the manifold wiſdom of God* †. It is eſpecially the fountain of wiſdom to ſinners. They look unto him and are enlightened. The ſlight and partial thoughts they once entertained of the great God, the miſtaken judgment they formed of themſelves, of their ſtate and their conduct, are corrected by their knowledge of the croſs; from thence they derive a ſolid hope, a humble ſpirit, juſt views of

* Iſa. v. 20. † Eph. iii. 10.

of their duty and obligations, and motives and proſpects which animate them in a courſe of cheerful, perſevering obedience to the will of God.

4. In this way, God, as revealed in Chriſt, is apprehended and choſen, as the chief and proper good of the ſoul. Thus the poor are enriched *with the pearl of great price*, and the weary obtain reſt. The mind, no longer burdened with anxiety, nor mortified with a ſucceſſion of diſappointments, which attended the vain purſuit of happineſs in earthly things, poſſeſſes preſent peace, and rejoices in the expectation of future glory. It is releaſed from the ſlavery of *hewing out broken ciſterns*, and introduced to the *fountain of living waters*. Or, to cloſe with the beautiful image in my text, *The people who once walked in darkneſs, and the region of the ſhadow of death, are tranſlated into the kingdom of life and ſalvation* *.

How greatly are they to be pitied who reject the light of the goſpel! It is true, they cannot ſee it; but it is equally true, they will not. But may I not hope that this is a day of divine power, in which ſome of you ſhall be made a willing people? Do not reaſon againſt your own life, but repent, and believe the goſpel. The light ſhines around you, whether you perceive it or not; and it has an efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. Where the goſpel is preached the Lord is preſent. If you call upon him, he will hear, and you ſhall receive your ſight. If the grace and the glory of the Saviour have hitherto made no impreſſion upon your heart, you are ſpiritually blind. Could you be ſenſible of your diſorder, the remedy is at hand. If now at laſt you are willing to ſeek him, he will be found of you. But if you deliberately prefer darkneſs, your ſtate is awfully dangerous; and if you perſiſt in your obſtinacy, your ruin is unavoidable. God is gracious

* Col. i. 13.

and long-ſuffering, but he will not be mocked *. Humble yourſelf at once and implore his mercy, or elſe prepare to meet him in judgment. But be aſſured he will not meet you as a man. You muſt either bend or break. The Lord forbid that he ſhould ſay to any of you, in the great day of his appearance, *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire!*

* Gal. vi. 7.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Characters and Names of Meſſiah.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given; and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder: and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor, The Mighty God, The Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.

SUCH was the triumphant exultation of the Old-Teſtament church! Their nobleſt hopes were founded upon the promiſe of MESSIAH; their ſubliméſt ſongs were derived from the proſpect of his advent. By faith, *which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for*, they conſidered the gracious declarations of the faithful unchangeable God as already accompliſhed, though the actual performance reſpected a period, as yet, future and diſtant; eſpecially as believers, under that diſpenſation, already felt the influence of the redemption, which MESSIAH was to conſummate in the fulneſs of time. It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of ſinners, that gave life and ſignificancy to all the inſtitutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwiſe, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy and burdenſome yoke *. Iſaiah therefore prepares this joyful ſong for the true ſervants of God who lived in his time; and though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a ſufficient compenſation for all their ſufferings, in being warranted to ſay, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a*

* Acts xv. 10.

ſon is given; and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder, &c.

This ancient ſong is ſtill new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New-Teſtament church, with ſuperior advantage. I truſt many of you underſtand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for ſomething wherein to rejoice and glory. Little reaſon have the wiſe * to glory in their ſuppoſed wiſdom, or the ſtrong in their fading ſtrength, or the rich in their tranſitory wealth; but this is a juſt and unfailing ground of glory to true Chriſtians, that *Unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given*, &c.

When a ſinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to underſtand the character and offices of MESSIAH, his ability and willingneſs to ſave thoſe who are ready to periſh, and the happineſs of all who are brought into ſubjection to his gracious government, and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name, then this ſong becomes his own, and exactly ſuits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many perſons will deſpiſe and pity him as a weak enthuſiaſt. And yet, perhaps, they do not think ſo unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that having ſuddenly diſcovered the ſolution of a difficult problem while he was bathing, he was ſo tranſported with joy, that he forgot his ſituation, ſprung inſtantly from the bath, and ran through the city crying, "I have "found it, I have found it!" He is not uſually charged with madneſs on this account, though the expreſſion of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cauſe. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to ecſtaſy, on almoſt any occaſion, but on that alone, which, above all others, will juſtify it. A perſon who would be thought deſtitute of taſte, if he was unaffected by the muſic

* Jer. ix. 23.

ſic to which this paſſage is ſet, would, at the ſame time, hazard his reputation for good ſenſe, with ſome judges, if he owned himſelf affected by the plain meaning of the words. Incompetent judges ſurely! who are pleaſed to approve of warmth and emotion of ſpirit, provided the object be trivial, and only condemn it in concerns of the greateſt importance! But I truſt the character of my auditory is very different, and that the moſt of you deſire to enter into the ſpirit of this paſſage, and to have a more lively ſenſe of your own intereſts in it. May the Lord grant your deſire, and accompany our meditations upon it with his power and bleſſing!

Every clauſe in this paſſage might furniſh ſubject for a long diſcourſe; but my plan will only permit me briefly to touch upon the ſeveral particulars, which will lead to a recapitulation or ſummary of what has been already conſidered more largely concerning the perſon, offices, and glory of MESSIAH. We have,

I. His incarnation. *Unto us a child is born:* In our nature, born of a woman: *Unto us a ſon is given,* not merely a man-child, but, emphatically, *a ſon,* the Son of God. This was the moſt precious gift, the higheſt proof and teſtimony of divine love. The diſtinction and union of theſe widely-diſtant natures, which conſtitute the perſon of Chriſt, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apoſtle, the *great myſtery of godlineſs* *, the pillar and ground of truth. I ſhall not repeat what I have already offered on this point in the fifth ſermon. It is the central truth of revelation, which, like the ſun, diffuſes a light upon the whole ſyſtem, no part of which can be rightly underſtood without it. Thus the Lord of all humbled himſelf, to appear

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

pear in the form of a ſervant, for the ſake of ſinners.

II. His exaltation. *The government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder.* In our nature he ſuffered, and in the ſame nature he reigns. When he had overcome the ſharpneſs, the ſting of death, he took poſſeſſion of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can ſay, He who governs in heaven and on earth, and whom all things obey, *is the child who was born, the ſon who was given for us.* Some ſubſequent paſſages will lead us, hereafter, to contemplate more directly the glory of the Redeemer's adminiſtration in the kingdoms of providence and grace. At preſent, therefore, I ſhall only obſerve, that the exaltation of the Redeemer infers the dignity and ſecurity of the people who are united to him by faith. They have, in one reſpect, an appropriate honour, in which the angels cannot ſhare. Their beſt friend, related to them in the ſame nature, is ſeated upon the throne of glory. Since he *is for them, who can be againſt them?* What may they not expect, when he who has ſo loved them as to redeem them with his own blood, *has all power committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth!* For,

III. The names and characters here aſcribed to him, are not only expreſſive of what he is in himſelf, but of what he has engaged to be to them.

1. *His name ſhall be called Wonderful.* In another place the word is rendered *Secret* *. It is true of him in both ſenſes. He is *Wonderful* in his perſon, obedience, and ſufferings; in his grace, government, and glory. So far as we underſtand his name, the revelation by which, as by a name, he is made known, we may, we muſt, believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge!

* Judges xiii. 18.

ledge! His name is *Secret.* Who can by *ſearching find him out* *? His greatneſs is incomprehenſible, his wiſdom untraceable, his fulneſs inexhauſtible, his power infinite. *No one knoweth the Son but the Father.* But *they* have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who truſt, love, and ſerve him; and in their view he is *Wonderful!* The apoſtle expreſſes the ſentiment of their hearts, when he ſays, *Yea, doubtleſs, I count all things but loſs and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.*

2. Another of his names is *Counſellor.* The great councils of redemption, in which every concern reſpecting the glory of God and the ſalvation of ſinners was adjuſted, were eſtabliſhed with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counſellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cauſe, and manages all our affairs in perfect righteouſneſs, and with infallible ſucceſs; ſo that no ſuit can poſſibly miſcarry which he is pleaſed to undertake. To him likewiſe we muſt apply (and we ſhall not apply in vain) for wiſdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty, and the honour of our profeſſion in the preſent life. In all our difficulties, dangers, and cares, we muſt look to him for guidance and ſupport. This is to be wiſe unto ſalvation. His ſecret is with them that conſult him; ſo that though the world may deem them weak and ignorant as babes, (and he teaches them to think thus of themſelves), they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important ſubjects, which are entirely hidden from thoſe who are wiſe and prudent in their own eyes.

3. *He is the mighty God.* Though in the office of Mediator, he acts in the character of a ſervant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the mighty God could make a proviſion capable of

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* Job xi. 7.

anſwering the demands of the holy law, which we had tranſgreſſed. Only the mighty God could be a ſuitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak helpleſs creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies they are expoſed to in their paſſage. Add to this, the honour, dependence, and obedience, which this great Shepherd claims from his ſheep, are abſolute and ſupreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the *mighty God*. Though real Chriſtians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit, may, and do differ in their views and explanations of ſome revealed truths, I conceive they muſt be all agreed in this point. It is not only neceſſary to be known as the only ſolid foundation of a ſinner's hope, but it immediately reſpects the object of divine worſhip. For if the Redeemer is not poſſeſſed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Teſtament, in its moſt obvious and literal ſignification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expreſsly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Farther, he ſhall be called *the Everlaſting Father*. *He is not aſhamed to call them brethren* *, having condeſcended to aſſume their human nature. But they are alſo his *children*. They are born into his family by the efficacy of his own word and Spirit. From him they derive their ſpiritual life, being united to him by faith, and receiving from firſt to laſt out of his fulneſs. And he is an *Everlaſting Father*. Our fathers according to the fleſh are ſubject to death. But his relation to them ſubſiſts unchangeably, and therefore they cannot be deſtitute; and he is thus equally to them all. *They* live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long ſucceſſion of ages; but *He* is the Father of the everlaſting age, *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever*. *All generations*

* Heb. ii. 11.

tions ſhall call him bleſſed. To him, therefore, the apoſtle teaches us to apply that ſublime paſſage of the Pſalmiſt, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands* *. *They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; and they all ſhall wax old as doth a garment; and as a veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed; but thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall not fail* †.

5. Laſtly, He ſhall be called *the Prince of Peace*, whoſe ſovereign prerogative it is, to *ſpeak peace to his people* ‡; and there is no peace, deſerving the name, but that which he beſtows. The ſcripture expreſsly declares, *There is no peace to the wicked* §. By whatever name we call that thoughtleſs ſecurity and inſenſibility, in which mankind generally live, while ignorant of God and of themſelves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindneſs and hardneſs of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be ſaid to poſſeſs peace, however fatally regardleſs they may be of futurity, who are at preſent under the dominion of reſtleſs, inſatiable, and inconſiſtent paſſions and appetites? But the kingdom of MESSIAH is a kingdom of peace, and in him, his happy ſubjects enjoy *a peace which paſſeth all underſtanding* ‖, ſuch as the world can neither give nor take away. He has made *peace by the blood of his croſs* **, for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and diſtreſs; until they feel the bitterneſs, and fear the conſequences of their ſins, and ſee the impoſſibility of helping themſelves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do ſeek him, thus *weary and heavy laden*, he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a ſeaſon, are like the ſea in a ſtorm, they are diſtreſſed with guilt, fears, and temptations; but when He reveals his mighty name and boundleſs grace to their hearts, and ſays, *Peace, be*

* Pſal. cii. 25,—27. † Heb. i. 10,—12. ‡ Pſal. lxxxv. 8.
§ Iſ. lvii. 21. ‖ Phil. iv. 7. ** Col. i. 20.

till *, there is a great calm. *Being juſtified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* He gives them peace likewiſe in a changing troubleſome world, by inviting, and enabling them to caſt all their cares upon him, and to truſt all their concerns in his hands, upon the aſſurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and over-rule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promiſes, they feel a compoſure and ſatisfaction. Knowing *that the hairs of their head are numbered*; that their afflictions, no leſs than their comforts, are tokens of his love, *that he will give them ſtrength according to their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death*; they are not greatly moved by any events, or diſturbed by apprehenſions, becauſe their hearts are fixed †, truſting in the Lord. Farther, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to ſeek and maintain peace among men. His love ſubdues the power of ſelf, and forms them to a ſpirit of philanthropy and benevolence, which has often ſuch an effect, that they who diſlike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and would willingly ſpeak evil of them, are aſhamed, and put to ſilence, by their perſeverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increaſes as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader ſtream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then ſtrongeſt and moſt unſhaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of reſigning their ſouls into his hands. This is the time, when, if not before, the falſe peace of the worldling, will give way to terror and diſmay. *But mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace* ‡. It muſt be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at ſome ſeaſons, uncomfortable

* Matt. iv. 39. † Pſal. cxii. 7. ‡ Pſal. xxxvii. 37.

table fears concerning a dying hour; but when the time of their diſmiſſion actually arrives, we ſeldom ſee them afraid of the ſummons. There is a ſtrength neceſſary to ſupport the ſoul at the approach of death, which is uſually with-held till the time of need. But then it is vouchſafed. They who have frequently acceſs to the beds of dying believers, can bear teſtimony, as eye-witneſſes, to the faithfulneſs of their Lord. How often have we ſeen them triumphing in the proſpect of immortality! as happy, in defiance of pain and ſickneſs, as we can well conceive it poſſible to be while in the body, and as ſure of heaven, as if they were already before the throne.

Such is the character of MESSIAH! This is the God whom we adore; our almighty unchangeable Friend! His greatneſs and goodneſs, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart, no more to rove; and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and deſire. From hence ſpring a cheerful, unreſerved obedience to his commands, and a deliberate voluntary ſubmiſſion to his holy will. For his people do not ſerve him, or yield to him by conſtraint; at leaſt, it is only the pleaſing conſtraint of love, which makes their duty their delight; and their burden and grief is, that they can ſerve him no better.

May we be all thus minded. I dare not hope it is ſo with us all at preſent. But this is the day of his grace. For this cauſe he came into the world, that he might draw many hearts to himſelf *. And for this purpoſe he favours us with his goſpel, by which he ſtill ſays, *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved* †. *Come unto me, and I will give you reſt* ‡. To be found among his faithful followers, in the great day when he ſhall come to judge the world, is the one thing, which, above all others, deſerves our ſolicitude.

Hear then his voice to-day. Perhaps you are appriſed of the neceſſity of a change of heart and life,

* John xii. 32. † Iſ. xlv. 22. ‡ Matth. xi. 28.

at ſome future period, in order to die ſafely. Such a change is equally neceſſary, if you wiſh to live comfortably. While you are unfit to die, you can have no true enjoyment of life. It were eaſy to prove at large, that procraſtination is highly dangerous. Admitting, that according to your preſent feelings, you really think yourſelf determined to ſeek the Lord at ſome future time, do you conſider how many uncertainties you preſume upon? Are you ſure that you ſhall not be ſuddenly cut off, by an unexpected and unthought of ſtroke; or viſited by a fever which may quickly bring you into a ſtate of delirium or ſtupefaction, and render your projected repentance impracticable? Yea, it will in any circumſtances be impracticable, unleſs God is pleaſed to influence your mind by his good Spirit. If you grieve this Spirit *now*, by reſiſting his operations, what reaſon have you to expect that he will *then* return? Do we not ſee many inſtances of what the poet, with great propriety, calls, *A ſlow ſudden death?* How many people, while pining away under the power of incurable diſeaſe, amuſe themſelves with the hope of recovery to the laſt gaſp; and though their acquaintance read death in their countenance for weeks or months, in defiance of ſuch repeated and long-continued warnings, they die as ſuddenly, with reſpect to their own apprehenſions, as if killed by lightning. Tremble leſt ſuch be your laſt end, if you trifle with God, who now calls you, by his goſpel, to ſeek him to-day, *while it is called to-day.*

But I would lead you to conſider your delay, not only as dangerous, but as unreaſonable. Why are you afraid of being happy too ſoon? What ſtrange and hard thoughts have you of God, if you ſuppoſe you can find more pleaſure in living according to your own wills, than in obedience to his commands! Can the world give you ſuch peace and ſatisfaction

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as I have attempted to deſcribe? Do you think a real perſuaſion that God is your friend, and that heaven will be your home, will ſpoil the reliſh of your earthly enjoyments, or make your lives uncomfortable? What hard thing does the Lord require of you, that you are ſo unwilling to comply? If we ſet aſide, for a moment, the conſideration of a future ſtate and a final judgment, yet even in a temporal view you would be a great gainer, if your ſpirit and your conduct were regulated by the goſpel. What heart-breaking troubles, what loſſes, conteſts, pains of body, and remorſe of conſcience, would ſome of you have avoided, if you had believed and obeyed the word of God! What diſtreſſes may your head-ſtrong paſſions ſoon plunge you into, if you preſume to go on in your ſins! For that the way of tranſgreſſors is hard, is not only declared in Scripture, but proved by the hiſtory and obſervation of every day. Forſake the fooliſh, therefore, and live. And while the door of mercy is ſtill open before you, pray to him who is able to bleſs you indeed, by delivering you from the guilt, and from the power of your iniquities; leſt, if being *often reproved**, and ſtill *hardening your hearts, you ſhould ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.*

* Prov. xxix. 1.

SER-

SERMON X.

The Angel's Meſſage and Song.

LUKE ii. 8,—14.

There were in the ſame country ſhepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord ſhone round about them: and they were ſore afraid. And the angel ſaid unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you: Ye ſhall find the babe wrapped in ſwaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, good-will towards men.

THE gratification of the *Great*, the *Wealthy*, and the *Gay*, was chiefly conſulted in the late exhibitions in Weſtminſter-Abbey. But notwithſtanding the expence of the preparations, and the ſplendid appearance of the auditory, I may take it for granted, that the ſhepherds, who were honoured with the firſt information of the birth of MESSIAH, enjoyed, at free coſt, a much more ſublime and delightful entertainment. How poor and trivial is the moſt ſtudied magnificence and brilliancy of an earthly court, compared with that effulgence of glory which ſurrounded the ſhepherds? The performers of this Oratorio, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, were a multitude of the

the heavenly hoſt. And though I do not ſuppoſe that the angel delivered his meſſage in the cadence which we call *Recitative*, I have no doubt but the chorus was a *Song*, ſweetly melodious as from bleſt voices. A ſong which the redeemed and the angels of the Lord are ſtill ſinging before the throne. A new ſong *. A ſong which will be always new. We are made acquainted with the ſubject, yea, with the very words of this ſong. May our hearts be ſuitably affected by the conſideration of them to-day! The melody and harmony of heaven are far above our conceptions. The muſic of that happy land has no dependence upon the vibrations of the air, or the admirable ſtructure of the human ear. But we have reaſon to believe, there is, in the world of light and love, ſomething analogous to what we call muſic, though different in kind, and vaſtly ſuperior in effect, to any ſtrains that can be produced by the moſt exquiſite voices, or inſtruments, upon earth; as we readily judge the glory of an angel to be unſpeakably more excellent, both in kind and in degree, than any thing that is deemed glorious among mortals.

To conſider this paſſage at large would require many diſcourſes. I ſhall confine myſelf at preſent to a few brief reflections, on the circumſtances of this heavenly viſion, the meſſage of the angel, and the concluding chorus or ſong.

I. The circumſtances.

1. *Lo, an angel came upon them, &c.* Suddenly, when they had no expectation of ſuch a viſit, without any thing that might previouſly engage their attention, all at once, like a flaſh of lightning, a glory ſhone around them, and an angel appeared. We do not wonder that they were impreſſed with fear. We live near, perhaps in the midſt of, an inviſible world, full of great and wonderful realities, which yet, by too many perſons, are conſidered and treated as non-

entities,

* Rev. v. 9.

entities, becauſe they are not perceived by our bodily ſenſes. But the ſcripture aſſures us of the fact; and to reject this teſtimony, becauſe it is not confirmed by our ſenſes, is no leſs irrational and unphiloſophical, than impious. A man born blind can have no more conception of light and colours, than we have of what paſſes in the world of ſpirits. And a nation of blind men, if there were ſuch a nation, would probably treat a ſeeing perſon as a viſionary madman, if he ſpoke to them of what he ſaw. But he would be ſure of his own perceptions, though he could not ſatisfy the enquiries and cavils of the blind. Our ſenſes are accommodated to our preſent ſtate; but there may be a multitude of objects, as real in themſelves, and as near to us, as any that we behold with our eyes; of which we, for want of ſuitable faculties, can have no idea. To deny this, and to make our ſenſes the criteria of the exiſtence of things which are not within their reach, is exactly ſuch an abſurdity, as a blind man would be guilty of, who ſhould deny the poſſibility of a rainbow, becauſe he never heard it nor felt it. However, *Faith is the evidence of things not ſeen.* And they who believe the word of God, cannot doubt of the exiſtence of an inviſible ſtate and inviſible agents. The barrier between the inhabitants of that ſtate and us, is too ſtrong to be paſſed; for the will of the great Creator ſeems to be the barrier. Otherwiſe it is probable they could eaſily ſurpriſe us, ſince, upon ſpecial occaſions, they have been permitted to diſcover themſelves. We have a natural dread of ſuch viſitants, even though they ſhould appear to us, as they did to the ſhepherds, as meſſengers of peace and mercy from God. Yet we muſt ſhortly mingle with them. Death will introduce us into the world of ſpirits; and what we ſhall then meet with, what *Beings* will be ready to accoſt us upon our firſt entrance into that unknown, unchangeable ſtate, who can ſay? It deſerves

ſerves our ſerious thought. We are now encompaſſed by the objects of ſenſe, but we muſt ſoon be ſeparated from them all. We live in a crowd, but we muſt die alone. Happy are they, who, like Stephen, ſhall be able to commend their departing ſpirits into the hands of Jeſus! He is Lord of all worlds, and has the keys of hades, of the inviſible ſtate.

2. The angel ſpoke. The goſpel was preached by an angel to Zecharias, to the virgin mother of MESSIAH, now to the Shepherds; and, perhaps, to none but theſe. The angel, who appeared to Cornelius, ſaid nothing to him of Jeſus, but only directed him to ſend for Peter *. The glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God, with reſpect to its dignity, depth, and importance, may ſeem a fitter theme for the tongue of an angel than of a man; but angels never ſinned, and though they might proclaim its excellency, they could not, from experience, ſpeak of its efficacy. In this reſpect ſinful worms are better qualified to preach to others, concerning him by whom they have, themſelves, been healed and ſaved. Their weakneſs, likewiſe, is better ſuited to ſhew that the influence and ſucceſs of the goſpel is wholly owing to the power of God. It has, therefore, pleaſed God to *put this treaſure into earthen veſſels*, and to commit the miniſtry of his word, not to angels, but to men. They whom he is pleaſed to employ in this office, however weak and unworthy in themſelves, derive an honour and importance from the meſſage entruſted to them, and are ſo far worthy of the ſame attention, as if an angel from heaven ſpoke. They are ſinful men, and have reaſon to think humbly of themſelves: nor ſhould they, as the ſervants of a ſuffering, crucified Maſter, either wonder or complain if they meet with unkindneſs from thoſe whom they wiſh to ſerve; but they may *magnify their office* †, and it is at the peril of their hearers to deſpiſe it. What the world accounts

* Acts x. 4, 5. † Rom. xi. 13.

counts in us *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, is made to thoſe who ſimply receive it, *the wiſdom and power of God*. To others, even angels would preach in vain. They *who hear not Moſes and the prophets*, who ſubmit not to the ordinary methods and means of grace which God has appointed, *would not be perſuaded, though one ſhould riſe from the dead*.

3. The angel was ſent with the moſt intereſting news that could be made known to mankind; not to Cæſar, or to Herod, or to the High Prieſt, but to obſcure and lowly ſhepherds. *The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth*, the petty diſtinctions that obtain among men are not regarded by him. He is equally near to them that fear him in every ſituation of life, as the ſun ſhines, as freely and fully, upon a cottage as upon a palace. Theſe ſhepherds were, doubtleſs, of the number of the happy few, who, in that time of degeneracy, were waiting and longing *for the conſolation of Iſrael*. The heads of the Jewiſh people found their conſolation in their rank and wealth, and in the reſpect paid them by the vulgar. Theſe things uſually add to the idea of ſelf-importance, and feed thoſe tempers which are moſt diſpleaſing to the Lord, and which indiſpoſe the mind to the reception of the goſpel, or to any due enquiry concerning it. And thus, in fact, from age to age, it has generally *been hidden from the wiſe and the great, and revealed unto babes*. The magi, or wiſe men, who lived in the eaſt, where the knowledge of aſtronomy obtained, but where the ſcripture was not known, were guided to MESSIAH by the appearance of a new ſtar or meteor. The ſhepherds, who were acquainted with the prophecies concerning MESSIAH, were informed of their accompliſhment by an angel. Thus the Lord was pleaſed to ſuit the different manner of making known his will, to the previous ſituation of the perſons.

II. The

11. The meſſage of the angel, though conciſe, was comprehenſive and full. It contained, The fact, *Unto you is born this day*—The place, *In the city of David*, that is, in Bethlehem, ſo called, becauſe David likewiſe had been born there *—The office of MESSIAH, *A Saviour*—his name, honour, and character, *Chriſt or the Anointed; the Lord*, the head and king of Iſrael, and of the church, the Lord of all. I do but recite theſe particulars now, as they will repeatedly offer to our conſideration in the ſeries of ſubjects before me. The deſcription of the ſtate in which they would find him, was ſuch, as could only be reconciled to his titles and honours, by that ſimple faith, which, without vain reaſoning, acquieſces in the declarations of God. For how unlikely would it ſeem to a merely human judgment, that the Saviour of ſinners, the promiſed MESSIAH, the Lord of all, ſhould be *a babe wrapped in ſwaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger*. Yet thus it was. *Though rich* in himſelf, *he became poor for our ſakes* †. On this account, as the ſcripture had foretold, *he was deſpiſed and rejected of men*. Though he came to his own, as a Lord or Maſter to his own houſe; yet, coming in this manner, his own profeſſed ſervants, who pretended that they were longing and waiting for him, ſlighted and oppoſed him; preferred a notorious malefactor to him, and put him to death as an impoſtor and blaſphemer. But the ſhepherds reaſoned not through unbelief, and therefore they were not ſtaggered; they obeyed the meſſage, they went, they ſaw, they believed.

The ſeeming repugnance between the greatneſs of MESSIAH's claims, and the ſtate of humiliation in which he appeared when upon earth, was the great ſtumbling-block then, and continues to be ſo at this day. Becauſe he ſtooped ſo low, and made himſelf of no reputation, too many ſtill refuſe to acknowledge his

* Luke ii. 4. † 2 Cor. viii. 9.

his divine character. But they who are willing to be taught by the word and Spirit of God, ſee a beauty and propriety in his ſubmitting to be born in a ſtable, and to live as a poor man, deſtitute of houſe or property. Hereby he poured contempt upon worldly pomp and vanity, ſanctified the ſtate of poverty to his followers, and ſet them an encouraging example to endure it with cheerfulneſs. They, like the ſhepherds and his firſt diſciples, are delivered from their natural prejudices, and are enabled *to behold his glory*, through the vail of his outward humiliation, *as the glory of the only begotten of the Father:* And his condeſcenſion in *becoming poor for their ſakes, that they through his poverty might be made rich*, affects their hearts with admiration and gratitude.

But though too many, who are governed by the ſpirit and maxims of this world, are far from admiring his love, in aſſuming our nature under thoſe circumſtances, which, from his infancy to his death, expoſed him to the contempt of his enemies, it is otherwiſe thought of in yonder world of light. For we read, that when the angel had declared to the ſhepherds the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly hoſt expreſſed their joy by a ſong, which is the next ſubject that offers to our conſideration.

III. Their higheſt praiſe was excited by a view of the effects which this unexampled love would produce.

1. *Glory to God in the higheſt.* In the higheſt heaven, in the higheſt degree, for this higheſt inſtance of his mercy. At the creation theſe *morning-ſtars ſung for joy* *. But redemption was a greater work than they had yet ſeen, and a work by which his goodneſs, wiſdom, and power would be ſtill more abundantly magnified. The glory of God, the exhibition of his adorable perfections, to the view of intelligent creatures, is the laſt and higheſt end of all his

* Job xxxviii. 7

his works. Nor would it be worthy of the infinite eternal God, in comparison with whose immensity, the aggregate of all created good is no more than a point compared with the universe, or a single ray of light compared with the sun, to propose any thing short of his own glory, as the ultimate, final cause of his designs. And in proportion as any finite intelligences are conformed to the will of their Creator, and impressed with a sense of his pre-eminence, their highest end and aim will be the same with his. If, therefore, we compare the glory of God and the good of his creatures together, we may refer to them what our Lord was pleased to declare of the two great commandments. The former is incomparably the first and greatest of his ends; the second, in its proper place and subordination, is like unto it, and inseparably connected with it, or rather derived from it. The former is, if I may so speak, the essential difference of the divine operations; the latter, so far as consistent with it, is the result of a glorious and efficacious property of his consummate excellence. In the redemption of fallen man, both are displayed to the highest advantage. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.*

The glory of his *goodness*, this shines bright in the capacities and happiness he has communicated to angels; but it shines with greater brightness in the mercy afforded to mankind; whether we consider the objects, who are sinners, rebels, and enemies; or his purpose in their favour, not only to restore the life they had forfeited, but to bestow it more abundantly *, with respect to title, security, and honour; or lastly, and principally, the mean by which their deliverance from everlasting misery, and their possession of everlasting happiness, is procured; and which could only be procured by the humiliation and death of the Son of his love.

The

* John x. 10.

The glory of his *wiſdom*, in adjuſting the demands of his holineſs, juſtice, and truth, with the purpoſes of his mercy: In providing ſuch a method for the exerciſe of his mercy, as renders his diſpleaſure againſt ſin more conſpicuous by pardoning, than by puniſhing it: In abaſing the ſinner's pride, by the very conſiderations which inſpire his hope and confidence; ſo that while he confeſſes himſelf unworthy of the very air that he breathes, he is encouraged and warranted to claim a participation in all the bleſſings of grace and glory: And finally, in propoſing motives, which, when rightly underſtood, are always found ſufficient to influence the heart, even though it has been habitually hardened in ſin, long deaf to the voice of reaſon, conſcience, and intereſt, and equally unaffected by the judgments or the mercies of God, till enlightened to perceive the excellency of the goſpel.

The glory of his *power*; in making all the acts of free agents, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, ſubſervient to this great purpoſe, not excepting thoſe who moſt laboured to obſtruct it; in changing the diſpoſition of the ſinner, however obſtinate; and in carrying on his work of grace, when once begun, in ſuch feeble inconſiſtent creatures as men are; in defiance of all difficulties and oppoſition ariſing from within, or without.

Theſe are ſubjects which *the angels deſire to look into* *, which fill the moſt exalted intelligences with admiration. The glory of God was manifeſted, was celebrated in the higheſt heavens, when MESSIAH was born of a woman.

2. The great deſign and effect of his appearance with regard to mankind, is peace. *On earth peace.* Man, as a fallen creature, is in a ſtate of war and rebellion againſt his Maker. He has renounced his allegiance and dependence, is become his own end. He is now againſt God, diſobedient to his laws, and diſaffected

* 1 Pet. i. 12.

diſaffected to his government. And his conſcience, if not ſtupified and cauterized by frequent reſiſtance of conviction, ſuggeſts that God is againſt him. He feels he is not happy here, he fears he ſhall be miſerable hereafter. This apprehenſion ſtrengthens his averſion from God. And, indeed, without an expreſs aſſurance from the Lord himſelf, whom he has offended, that there is forgiveneſs with him, he would not only fear, but ſink into deſpair, if he rightly underſtood the horrid enormity of a ſtate of alienation from the bleſſed God. But infinite wiſdom and mercy have provided, and propounded a method, by which the honour of the divine perfections and government are ſecured, and pardon and peace vouchſafed to rebels. *God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf.* The knowledge of this mercy, when revealed to the ſinner's heart, ſubdues his enmity, conſtrains him to throw down his arms, and to make an unreſerved ſubmiſſion and ſurrender of himſelf; forms him to a temper of love and confidence, and diſpoſes him to habitual and cheerful obedience. Now *mercy and truth are met together, righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other* *; and God is glorified in the higheſt, for peace proclaimed upon the earth.

The expreſſion of *good-will towards men,* ſeems to riſe upon the former. Not only peace, but acceptance and adoption in the Beloved. Sinners who believe in the Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they have deſerved, but are united to their Saviour; conſidered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life, and his glory. God is their portion, and heaven is their home. The Lord's ſatisfaction in this, as the greateſt of all his works, is expreſſed by the prophet in ſuch aſtoniſhing terms of condeſcenſion, as ſurpaſs our utmoſt conceptions; and we can only ſay, *Lord, what is man that thou art thus mindful*

* Pſal. lxxxv. 10.

mindful of him! We believe, admire, and adore. *The Lord thy God in the midſt of thee is mighty: He will ſave, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will reſt in his love, he will rejoice over thee with ſinging* *.

Aſſuredly this ſong of the heavenly hoſt is not the language of our hearts by nature. We once ſought our pleaſure and happineſs in a very different way. We were indifferent to the glory of God, and ſtrangers to his peace. And ſome of us are ſtill blind to the excellencies of the goſpel, and deaf to its gracious invitations. But we muſt not expect to ſing with the great company of the redeemed hereafter, before the throne of glory, unleſs we learn, and love, their ſong while we are here †. They who attain to the inheritance of the ſaints in light, are firſt made meet for it in the preſent life, and in this way. They believe the teſtimony of the ſcripture reſpecting their own guilt, unworthineſs, and helpleſſneſs; then they receive the record which God has given of his Son. They renounce *all confidence in the fleſh* ‡; they rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and from his fulneſs they derive grace to worſhip God in the Spirit. A ſenſe of their obligations to the Saviour, diſpoſes them to praiſe him now as they *can*; and they rejoice in hope of ſeeing him ere long as he is, and that then they ſhall praiſe him as they *ought*. For heaven itſelf, as deſcribed in the word of God, could not be a ſtate of happineſs to us, unleſs we are like-minded with the apoſtle, to *account all things loſs and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

* Zeph. iii. 17. † Rev. xiv. 3. ‡ Phil. iii. 3.

SER-

SERMON XI.

Meſſiah's Entrance into Jeruſalem.

ZECH. ix. 9, 10.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is juſt, and having ſalvation, lowly, and riding upon an aſs, and upon a colt the fole of an aſs.—And he ſhall ſpeak peace unto the heathen.

THE narrowneſs and littleneſs of the mind of fallen man are ſufficiently conſpicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eaſtern monarch, as deſcribed in hiſtory, exhibit him to us in what he himſelf accounts his beſt eſtate. If you ſuppoſe him ſeated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in ſplendid apparel, wearing a crown or tiara ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, ſurrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you ſee the poor worm at the ſummit of his happineſs. He has no conception of any thing greater than this. And the ſpectators are generally of the ſame mind. They admire, and they envy his lot; and there is hardly a perſon in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place, were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would ſurely be mortified, if, in the height of his ſelf-complacence, he could conſider, that he had the very ſame regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the ſame deſire to be admired and envied, and felt the ſame kind of ſatisfaction in diſtinction above his fellows,

when he was a child of ten years old. He is in effect a child ſtill, only he has changed his play-things, and now acts upon a larger ſcale, but with the ſame trifling and contracted views.

How different was MESSIAH's entry into Jeruſalem foretold in this prophecy, the accompliſhment of which we read in the evangeliſts! And how differently was he affected by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This *King of kings and Lord of lords was meek and lowly, riding upon an aſs's colt* *. And though a ſecret divine influence conſtrained the multitude to acknowledge his character, and, with ſome accommodation to the cuſtoms of the times, *to ſtrew their garments in the way*, as they proclaimed the King who came in the name of Jehovah; yet he appeared unmoved by their applauſe. Had the hiſtory of Jeſus, like thoſe which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the moſt ſplendid qualities of a philoſopher or a hero, we ſhould never have known how his mind was engaged in this ſituation. The Saviour muſt be divine, his hiſtorian muſt be inſpired, the fact muſt be true; for man could not have invented ſuch a circumſtance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, becauſe his heart was filled with compaſſion for his enemies, who were thirſting for his blood. For it was then, amidſt the acclamation of his diſciples, that he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. *Oh that thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes.*

An angel proclaimed his birth to the ſhepherds; and wiſe men from the Eaſt paid ſuch attention to the new-

* Luke xix. 35,—38.

new-born Saviour, that the jealouſy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to deſtroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a ſtate of obſcurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher deſcription than that of *The carpenter's ſon.* In the courſe of his miniſtry he appeared and was treated as a poor man, he had no certain dwelling-place, he ſubmitted to receive ſupplies, for his ſupport, from the contributions of a few of his followers, for the moſt of them were poor like himſelf. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the neceſſitous and miſerable, he admitted no alteration in his own external ſtate, but was content to be poor and deſpiſed, for our ſakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occaſion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his perſon and character, was when he fulfilled this prophecy. And ſtill he was the ſame meek and lowly Saviour. As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his proceſſion. He approached Jeruſalem, attended, indeed, by a concourſe of people, but riding upon an aſs, and weeping for his enemies.

The paſſage of the *Meſſiah* which follows the chorus of the heavenly hoſt, is taken from theſe verſes. It does not include the whole of them. In one clauſe there is a ſmall alteration in the expreſſion, but it does not affect the ſenſe. Inſtead of, *He is juſt, having ſalvation,* it is, *He is a righteous Saviour.*

We may notice,

I. The prophet's addreſs. *To the daughter of Zion and Jeruſalem.*

II. The exhortation to joy. *Rejoice and ſhout.*

III. The cauſe aſſigned for this joy. *Thy King cometh.*

IV. The characters of the King. *A righteous Saviour.*

V. His great deſign. *To ſpeak peace to the heathen.*

I. *Zion and Jeruſalem* are indifferently uſed as emblems of the church, or profeſſing people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradiſtinguiſhed from each other, Zion, the city of David, the ſeat of government, and of the temple-worſhip, may denote the principal perſons of the eccleſiaſtical and civil ſtate; and Jeruſalem may be expreſſive of the people at large, the daughters of a place ſignifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boaſted that they were the Lord's peculiar people: they had the prophecies and promiſes concerning MESSIAH in their hands, and were profeſſedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are, therefore, called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though *he came to his own*, to his own nation, city, and temple; his own people, to whoſe affection and allegiance he had the juſteſt claim, *received him not* *. But there were a few who truly waited for him, as the hope and conſolation of Iſrael, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that *he only had the words of eternal life*, and became his followers. By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge *that* prophet whom Moſes had foretold, *God would raiſe up among them like unto himſelf* †, that is, to be, as he had been, a lawgiver, to inſtitute a new diſpenſation of the true religion; and their refuſal involved them, as a nation, in the puniſhment, which Moſes had likewiſe denounced againſt thoſe who ſhould refuſe to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in poſſeſſing a divine revelation, while the reſt of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obſtinacy more inexcuſable, and their condemnation more ſevere. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the ſtriking parallel in this reſpect, between

* John i. 11. † Deut. xviii. 15,—19. Acts vii. 37.

tween the Jewiſh nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, ſince that period, have admitted the New Teſtament as a revelation from God. By aſſuming the Chriſtian name, and ſo far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the ſpirit and deſign of the goſpel, and treat the miniſters of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the ſteps, and ſhare in the guilt, of thoſe who pretended to expect MESSIAH, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In perſon he could be crucified but once; but the ſcripture ſpeaks of thoſe who *crucify the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame.* How far this is the caſe of the perſons who can bear to hear of his paſſion and his kingdom when made the ſubject of a muſical entertainment, but upon no other occaſion, deſerves their ſerious conſideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by thoſe who are ſenſible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to ſave. To theſe the prophet brings a joyful meſſage, and they will *rejoice and ſhout.* The joy of harveſt *, and of the victors in war when dividing the ſpoil of the vanquiſhed, is celebrated with ſhouting. But ſinners, who, by the knowledge of MESSIAH, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkneſs, and are tranſlated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far ſuperior, in kind and degree, to any ſatisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is *a joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* †. Jeſus, when known and received by faith, is, in the higheſt ſenſe, light to thoſe who ſat in darkneſs, health to the ſick, food to the hungry, and reſt to the weary ſoul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodneſs when he was upon earth; and he ſtill has a people, and will have to the end of time, who do and ſhall rejoice in him upon theſe accounts, though every ſpring of temporal joy ſhould be dried up. They

* Iſa. ix. 3. † 1 Pet. i. 8.

who know his name, and put their truſt in him, are warranted to appropriate thoſe ſtrong expreſſions of another prophet, *Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation* *.

III. The ground and cauſe of this joy is aſſigned. *The King cometh.* MESSIAH is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate †, by whoſe order it was fixed over him upon his croſs. That this was not a ſlight and arbitrary circumſtance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangeliſts to preſerve the remembrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of kings, King and Lord of nations, King of worlds; but he is here ſpoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to eſtabliſh upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, intereſts, and aims of it, are peculiar to itſelf. His power and providence rule over all; but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the ſubjects of his ſpiritual kingdom, who, though they are *in* the world, are not *of* it, *but ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth.* Their ‡ πολίτευμα, their true citizenſhip, is in heaven. Theſe are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their ſeveral departments and duties aſſigned them according to his will, as members of ſociety, and it does not yet appear what they ſhall be ‖; they are even now the children and ſervants of the Lord, and he manifeſts himſelf to them as he does not to others. Happy are theſe his ſubjects who dwell under his ſhadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he

* Hab. iii. 17. 18. † Mark xv. 2. ‡ Phil. ii. 20.
‖ 1 John iii. 2.

he bruiſes and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden ſceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free conſent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times acceſs; and from whence they receive, in anſwer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their ſins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed ſupply anſwerable to all their wants, cares, ſervices, and conflicts. So that, though they are ſurrounded with ſnares, and fiercely oppoſed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himſelf is their King and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this king. *He is juſt, having ſalvation*, or, as it is in the paſſage of the *Meſſiah*, *He is a righteous Saviour.*

1. *He is righteous.* His kingdom is founded in righteouſneſs. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of ſin, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, ſo likewiſe for his ſake. Such is his command, and ſuch is his promiſe. *If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it* *. In pleading their cauſe, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And therefore, becauſe his interceſſion is founded upon a righteous ſtipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not ſay, *Father*, I aſk, but, *I will, that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory* †.

2. He is a *Saviour.* Having ſalvation in himſelf; yea, *He is their ſalvation* ‡. His wiſdom, power, compaſſion, and determined purpoſe, are all engaged to ſave them fully, freely, and for ever; to ſave them from guilt, from Satan, and from ſin, through all the dangers and trials of this life; to ſave them to the uttermoſt, till he fixes them finally out of the

* John xiv. 14. † John xvii. 24. ‡ Iſa. xii. 2.

reach of all evil, and puts them in poſſeſſion of all the happineſs of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great deſign was not confined to Iſrael after the fleſh. *He ſhall ſpeak peace to the heathen* alſo. His kingdom compriſes, beſides the believing poſterity of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidſt all nations, people, and languages, *from the Eaſt and the Weſt, from the North and the South* *. Though the heathen were univerſally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conſcience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring thoſe near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their priſons ſhall be opened, their chains broken †, their condemnation reverſed, and they ſhall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He ſhall likewiſe conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make of both one people ‡, pulling down the walls of ſeparation and prejudice, that with one heart and mind they may love, ſerve, and praiſe him. For where faith in him obtains, all diſtinctions are loſt and ſuperſeded. *There is* then, *neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt is all, and in all* ‖.

Much has been already done by the goſpel. Multitudes have been turned from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols to ſerve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promiſe will be more extenſively and literally fulfilled; when the kingdom ſhall be the Lord's to the end of the earth; when the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in, all Iſrael be ſaved, and the nations ſhall learn war no more.

From theſe characters of the Saviour, we may collect

* Luke xiii. 28, 29. † Iſa. xlv. 14. ‡ Eph. ii. 13,—16.
‖ Col. iii. 11.

lect the character of his people. For they beholding his glory, are changed (according to the meaſure of their faith) into the ſame image. The incommunicable perfections of God, ſuch as his ſovereignty and all-ſufficiency, can only produce in his people correſpondent impreſſions of reverence, ſubmiſſion, and dependence; an attempt to be like him in theſe reſpects would be highly impious, and was indeed the original ſource of our apoſtaſy from him. Man, by indulging a deſire of being like God, rebelled againſt him, aſpired at independence, and preferred the gratification of his own will to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable conſequence of this madneſs is miſery. It is not poſſible that he ſhould be happy, till he be reduced to his proper ſtate of ſubordination. But that light of the glory of God in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the goſpel, has a transforming effect upon thoſe who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and reſemble him, whoſe they are, and whom they ſerve, *in righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and truth* *.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I ſpeak not of their relative ſtate, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to *love righteouſneſs and hate iniquity* †. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themſelves as becomes weak and unworthy ſinners, and aſcribe the glory of their ſalvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenor of their conduct is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the moſt endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tem-

* Eph. v. 9. † Pſal. xlv. 7.

pers, deſires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are, in deed and in truth, a ſaved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in their hearts by faith, teaches them likewiſe to love one another, and to exerciſe benevolence to all men. When they underſtand the true nature of his ſpiritual kingdom, which conſiſteth not in external diſtinctions and forms, *but in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt* *; and that it is his great deſign to form to himſelf a people from amongſt the nations of the earth, who ſhall be one body, enlivened by one and the ſame ſpirit, they acquire a large and comprehenſive mind. They riſe above the influence of names, parties, and diviſions; are freed from the narrow views and intereſts of ſelf; *and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humility, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearance and forgiveneſs* †, in conformity to the pattern and will of their great Exemplar. Thus he ſpeaks peace to them, and huſhes all their angry, tumultuous paſſions into a calm.

Such is the ſpirit and tendency of the goſpel. Let us try ourſelves by this touchſtone, meaſure ourſelves by this rule, and weigh ourſelves in theſe balances of the ſanctuary. They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the ſpirit of their minds. If he be indeed your King, your conſciences will bear you witneſs that you revere, imitate, and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly muſt be ſenſible yourſelf, and others muſt obſerve that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you ſhould be convinced, that hitherto you have been a Chriſtian only in name and in form, but deſtitute of that which conſtitutes the life and power of real godlineſs, this will be a good beginning;

* Rom. xiv. 17. † Col. iii. 12.

beginning. For though it be high time that you ſhould in good earneſt attend to theſe things, bleſſed be God it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour; ſeek him as ſuch, and he will ſpeak peace to you alſo. His ſure promiſe is recorded for your encouragement, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wiſe caſt out* *.

* John vi. 37.

SERMON XII.

Effects of Meſſiah's Appearance.

ISAIAH xxxv. 5, 6.

Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped: Then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſing.

HOW beautiful and magnificent is the imagery by which the prophet, in this chapter, repreſents the effects of MESSIAH's appearance! The ſcene, propoſed to our view, is a barren and deſolate wilderneſs. But when he, who in the beginning ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light*, condeſcends to viſit this wilderneſs, the face of nature is ſuddenly changed by his preſence. Fountains and ſtreams of water burſt forth in the burning deſert, the ſoil becomes fruitful, clothed with verdure, and adorned with flowers. The towering cedars, which were the glory of Lebanon, and the richeſt paſtures, which were the excellency of Carmel, preſent themſelves to the eye, where, a little before, all was uncomfortable and dreary. How is it, that ſo few of thoſe who value themſelves upon their taſte, and who profeſs to be admirers of paſtoral poetry in particular, are ſtruck with the elegance and beauty of this deſcription? Alas, we can only aſcribe their indifference to the depravity of the human heart. They would, ſurely, have admired this picture, could they have met with it in any of their favourite authors; but deſcriptive paintings in this ſtyle, ſo exquiſitely combining grandeur with ſimplicity, are only

only to be found in the Bible, a book which their unhappy prejudices and paſſions too often lead them to depreciate and neglect. But they who have a ſcriptural and ſpiritual taſte, not only admire this paſſage as a deſcription of a pleaſing change in outward nature, but conſider it as a juſt and expreſſive repreſentation of a more important, a moral change, of which they have themſelves been, in a meaſure, the happy ſubjects. The barren wilderneſs reminds them of the ſtate of mankind by the fall, and of their own hearts, before MESSIAH, the Sun of righteouſneſs, aroſe upon them with healing, with light, power, and comfort, in his beams. In that memorable hour, old things paſſed away, and all things became new. The Lord, by ſhining into their hearts, and ſhewing them his glory in the perſon of Chriſt, has created for them a new heaven and a new earth. The works of God around them in his creation and providence aſſume a different appearance. Before, they lived without him in the world; but now, they ſee his hand wherever they look, they hear his voice in every event; for now the principles of his grace are planted in their ſouls, and they are no longer barren nor unfruitful, but are *filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to his praiſe* *.

The verſes which I have read exhibit the effects of MESSIAH'S power and goodneſs, by another image equally pleaſing. Not only the wilderneſs, but the inhabitants of the wilderneſs partake of the virtue of the great Redeemer. He finds them in circumſtances of diſtreſs, which he only can relieve. But when he comes, the blind receive their ſight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb have voices given them to reſound his praiſe. Theſe mighty works, in their literal ſenſe, marked his character, and confirmed his claims, when he was upon earth; and to theſe he himſelf appealed, in proof of his being the promiſed

* Phil. i. 11.

promiſed Saviour whom the prophets had foretold, and that no other was to be expected *.

But the words have a ſtill more ſublime and important ſenſe. As the great Phyſician, he cured all manner of bodily diſeaſes and infirmities. But this was not the principal deſign for which he came into the world. The maladies to which ſin has ſubjected the body, are but emblems of the more dreadful evils which it has brought upon the ſoul. He came to open the eyes of the mind; to make the obſtinate will attentive and obedient to the voice of God; to invigorate our benumbed and paralytic faculties, that we may be active and cheerful in his ſervice; and to open our lips, that our mouths may ſhew forth his praiſe. I have a good hope that I may warrantably ſay, *This day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears* †. Some of you who were once darkneſs, are now light in the Lord.

Theſe different effects are produced by one ſimple, but powerful, operation. While Lazarus lay in the grave, all his natural powers were inactive. But when the voice of the Son of God reſtored him to life ‡, he was, of courſe, immediately enabled to ſee, to hear, to move, and to ſpeak. Thus, while we were ſpiritually dead, we were neceſſarily blind, deaf, dumb, and motionleſs, with reſpect to all the objects and faculties of that life of God in the ſoul, which is the perfection and honour of our nature. When we are made partakers of this life, by a new and heavenly birth, then our ſpiritual ſenſes are brought into exerciſe: then the eyes of the blind are opened, to ſee the beauty and glory of divine truths; we hear the voice of God, we feel a liberty to walk and act in his ſervice, and our tongues are taught to praiſe him. Here are four chief effects of a work of grace upon the heart, which diſtinguiſh believers from the reſt of mankind.

And

* Matt. xi. 3.—6. † Luke iv. 21. ‡ John xi. 43.

And theſe effects are all to be aſcribed to MESSIAH. For they are all wrought by the agency of his Holy Spirit. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which are abſolutely neceſſary, as well for the perpetuating of his goſpel from age to age, as for making it efficacious and ſucceſsful, are beſtowed upon ſinners wholly upon the account of his mediation. It was, when *he aſcended on high and led captivity captive* *, that he procured theſe bleſſings for *rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* And it was only for his ſake, and on the account of what he was to accompliſh in the fulneſs of time, as intimated in the promiſe of the ſeed of the woman appointed to break the ſerpent's head, that there were any gracious communications afforded to fallen man, from the firſt entrance of ſin into the world. But now the Redeemer's great work is fulfilled, his ſalvation is more openly revealed and applied by the publication of the goſpel, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven, and ſinners hear the voice of God and live. Then all the changes prefigured and predicted in my text take place, and the wilderneſs becomes a fruitful field.

1. They were once blind, but now they *ſee.* The religion of true believers is not the effect of imagination and blind impulſe, but is derived from a ſolid knowledge, which will bear the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny, and is the reaſonable ſervice of an enlightened underſtanding. They ſee God; their apprehenſions of him are, in ſome meaſure, anſwerable to his greatneſs and his goodneſs, and inſpire them with reverence and love. Their conceptions of other things in which they are moſt nearly intereſted, are agreeable to the truth. Sin appears to them hateful in itſelf, as well as miſchievous in its conſequences; and holineſs, not only neceſſary by the ordination of God, but deſirable for its own ſake, as eſſentially belonging to the true

* Pſal. lxviii. 18.

true dignity and happineſs of man. They know themſelves; they ſee and feel that they are ſuch creatures as the Bible deſcribes them to be, weak, depraved, and vile. Of courſe, they ſee the folly of attempting to recommend themſelves to God, and can no longer place any dependence on what they once accounted their wiſdom, power, or righteouſneſs; and therefore they ſee the abſolute neceſſity of a Saviour. They ſee, likewiſe, and approve the method of ſalvation propoſed by the goſpel, as worthy of the wiſdom and juſtice of God, and every way adapted to the exigencies of their ſins, wants, and fears. They ſee and admire the excellence, dignity, and ſufficiency of him, on whom their help is laid. His power and authority engage their confidence, his love captivates and fixes their hearts. They ſee the vanity of the preſent ſtate, and the vaſt importance of eternity. In theſe reſpects they have all of them a good underſtanding, however inferior in natural capacity, or acquired knowledge, to the wiſe men of the world.

2. Their knowledge, ſo far as they have attained, is not merely ſpeculative, cold, and indiſtinct, like the light of the moon. The Sun of Righteouſneſs has ſhined into their hearts. The light they enjoy is vital, cheering, and effective. Becauſe they thus ſee, they *hear* likewiſe. They were once deaf to the voice of God, whether he ſpoke by his word or his providence; whether in the language of mercy or judgment. But now their deaf ears are unſtopped. They are now attentive, ſubmiſſive, and willing to receive his inſtructions, and to obey his commands. With them, one *Thus ſaith the Lord*, has the force of a thouſand arguments. They deſire no farther proof of a doctrine, no other warrant for their practice, no other reaſon for any diſpenſation, than Thus the Lord has ſaid, This he requires, and This is his appointment. Thus their wills are brought into

to ſubjection; and they ſo underſtand, as to believe and obey.

3. Farther, with their ſight and hearing they receive power and activity. Once, they were tied and bound in the chain of their ſins, or like a man benumbed with a dead palſy, unable to move. If they ſometimes ſeemed to expreſs deſires that might be called *good* with reſpect to their object, they were faint and ineffectual. But now their fetters are broken, the health and ſtrength of their ſouls is reſtored, and God has wrought in them not only to *will*, but alſo to *do according to his good pleaſure* *. It is not more wonderful that a cripple ſhould ſuddenly recover the uſe of his limbs, than that a perſon, who has long been fettered in ſinful habits, ſhould be enabled to move and act with alacrity in the ſervice of God. But in the day of divine power, ſinners are made both willing and able. How burdenſome was that which they once accounted their religion! how little comfort did it yield them! how little did it aſſiſt them againſt their paſſions, or againſt their fears? But all things are become new, ſince they have attained to a life of faith in the Son of God. Their religious ſervice is now pleaſant, and their warfare againſt ſin and the world, victorious. Their obligations, motives, reſources, encouragements, and proſpects, inſpire them with a holy vigour, to run, with patience and perſeverance, the race that is ſet before them.

4. Having their ſight and hearing thus reſtored, and their hearts enlarged to walk at liberty in the ways of wiſdom; they are no longer dumb, ſilent, and ſullen, but, out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths ſpeak the language of gratitude, praiſe, and joy. For though moſt people have the faculty of ſpeech, and can uſe, or rather abuſe, their tongues fluently; though we are ſufficiently expert

* Phil. ii. 13.

expert from our childhood, in the dialects of falſehood, profaneneſs, and folly; yet, by nature, we are dumb with reſpect to the language that becomes us, as the creatures of God, and as thoſe who have ſinned againſt him, and yet are invited to ſeek his mercy. But when grace teaches the heart, then the heart teaches the mouth *. When we believe, then we ſpeak, yea, we ſing and greatly rejoice; as it is written, *In that day I will praiſe thee; though thou waſt angry, thine anger is turned away* †. And again, *The voice of joy and thankſgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous* ‡. *Let the redeemed of the Lord ſay, That he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever* §.

It is of great importance to examine ourſelves by this teſt, and not to be ſatisfied with our knowledge of the goſpel, any farther than our conſciences bear us witneſs, that it has produced a real, moral, change in our tempers, conduct, and purſuits. For there is a knowledge which is falſely ſo called. It puffeth up, but edifieth not. Our Lord's declaration deſerves our moſt ſerious attention. *For judgment I am come into this world; that they which ſee not, may ſee; and that they which ſee, might be made blind* ‖. It is very poſſible, yea, very eaſy, by the help of books, ſermons, and converſe, to acquire an orderly and ſyſtematic knowledge of divine truths; it may be learnt thus, like any other branch of human ſcience, and the head be well ſtored with orthodox ſentiments; and there may be an ability to prove and defend them, in a way of argumentation, while the heart is utterly a ſtranger to their ſalutary influence. Such characters are too common. None make a greater parade and boaſt of ſeeing, than theſe perſons. None are more fatally blinded. They ſmile, with diſdain, when they ſpeak of a ſelf-righteouſneſs

* Prov. xvi. 23. † Iſa. xii. 1. ‡ Pſal. cxviii. 15.
§ Pſal. cvii. 1, 2. ‖ John ix. 39.

ouſneſs founded upon prayers, alms-deeds, and ſacraments; but are not aware that they themſelves live in the very ſpirit of the Phariſees *, ſo clearly deſcribed, and ſo expreſsly condemned, in the New Teſtament. Their ſuppoſed knowledge of the doctrines which they miſunderſtand and abuſe, is the righteouſneſs on which they build their hopes; and truſting to this, they deſpiſe all thoſe who are ſtricter in practice than themſelves, as ignorant and legal; and diſcover almoſt as great diſlike to cloſe and faithful preaching, as they could do to poiſon. Though the doctrines of the goſpel, when rightly received, are productive of godlineſs, it is to be feared, there are people who eſpouſe and plead for them, to quiet their conſciences, by furniſhing them with excuſes for the ſins they are unwilling to forſake It is not ſurpriſing, that they who are diſpleaſed with the yoke of our Lord's precepts, ſhould ſeem friendly to the idea of ſalvation without the works of the law. The notion of the final perſeverance of believers, may afford a pillow for thoſe to reſt on, who being at preſent deſtitute of all feeling of ſpiritual life, labour to perſuade themſelves that they are Chriſtians, becauſe they had ſome ſerious thoughts, and made ſome profeſſion of the truth, many years ago. So likewiſe, in what the Scriptures teach, of the total inability of fallen man, they think they have a plea to juſtify their negligence and ſloth, and therefore are not diſpoſed to contradict the teſtimony. The invitation and command to wait, and watch, and ſtrive, in the ways and means of the Lord's appointment, they evade, as they think, with impunity, by confeſſing the charge, and ſaying, I am a poor creature indeed, I can do nothing of myſelf aright, and therefore to what purpoſe ſhould I attempt to do any thing? A miniſter may preach upon theſe points, in general terms, and obtain

* Luke xviii. 2.

tain their good word. But if he ſpeaks plainly and faithfully to conſcience; if he bears teſtimony not only againſt dead works, but againſt a dead faith; againſt ſpiritual pride, evil tempers, evil ſpeaking, love of the world, and ſinful compliances; if he inſiſts that the branches of the true vine ſhould bear grapes, and not the ſame fruit as the bramble; hearers of this ſtamp will think they do God ſervice, by cenſuring all he can ſay, as low and legal traſh. How awful! that people ſhould be blinded by the very truths which they profeſs to believe! Yet I fear ſuch caſes are too frequent. God grant a deluſion of this kind may never be found amongſt us! *For if the ſalt* itſelf *ſhould loſe its ſavour, wherewith ſhall it be ſalted*?* May we come ſimply to the light, with a deſire of ſeeing more of ourſelves, and more of our Saviour; that we may be more humble and ſpiritual, more afraid of ſin, more watchful and ſucceſsful in ſtriving againſt it; and, in our whole converſation, more conformable to our glorious Head!

But to return. From what has been offered upon this ſubject, we may obſerve,

1. That true Chriſtianity is friendly to ſociety, and to the common intereſts of mankind. It is the ſource of peace, tenderneſs, benevolence, and every humane temper. It is calculated to ſoothe the fierce diſpoſition, to enlarge the ſelfiſh ſpirit, and to tranſform the lion into the lamb. What then muſt we think of thoſe pretended friends to liberty and free enquiry, whoſe unhappy zeal is employed to rob us of the only light and balm of life? who, by their miſrepreſentations and cavils, endeavour to perſuade others, though they cannot effectually perſuade themſelves, that the goſpel, a ſcheme ſo wiſe in its conſtitution, ſo ſalutary in its deſign, ſo powerful in its effects, is no better than an impoſition, the contrivance of ſuperſtitious or artful men! Why ſhould

* Matt. v. 13.

ſhould they attempt to take away the foundation of our hope, and the ſpring of our comfort, (if they were able), when they know they have nothing to ſubſtitute in their place! Let us think of them with that compaſſion which their ſtate calls for; and pray for them, *if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth* *.

2. The change thus wrought is great, marvellous, and, if not ſo frequent, might be ſtyled miraculous. It is more than education, example, perſuaſion, or reſolution can perform. It is the work of God alone, to open the blind eyes, to change the heart of ſtone into fleſh, and to raiſe the dead.

This thought ſhould exclude boaſting. The happy ſubjects of this change were no better by nature or practice than others. They have nothing but what they have received. The glory and praiſe is due to the Lord alone. It ſhould likewiſe ſoften their cenſure of thoſe who are ſtill in a ſtate of alienation from God, or at leaſt prevent the emotions of anger and reſentment towards them. They know not what they do. Their danger ſhould excite our pity, and our friendly endeavours to recover them from the error of their way. And, eſpecially, we ſhould be careful ſo to regulate our behaviour, *that if they obey not the word, they may without the word be convinced* and *won* †, by the force of our example. If the Lord be pleaſed to do that for them which he has done for us, their diſlike of us, and their oppoſition to us, will be quickly at an end; and though they ſet out after us, they may poſſibly make a ſwifter progreſs in the Chriſtian life than we have done. Thus, though Saul of Tarſus approached Damaſcus as an enemy and a perſecutor, when the ſcales fell from his eyes, he not only immediately joined the diſciples, but in a little time became a pattern to them.

That

* 2 Tim. ii. 25. † 1 Pet. iii. 1.

That the change is the work of God, ſhould likewiſe be conſidered by thoſe, who, from a ſenſe of the greatneſs of their ſins, and the ſtrength of their ſinful habits, are ready to ſink into deſpair. Whatever apparent difficulty there may be in your caſe, it is eaſy to divine power. *All things are poſſible with God* *, and *all things*, likewiſe, *are poſſible to him that believeth* †. The promiſes invite you to apply to him who is the Author and Finiſher of faith, and who has ſaid for your encouragement, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out.*

* Mark x. 27. † Mark ix. 23.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

The Great Shepherd.

ISAIAH xl. 11.

He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he ſhall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.

IT is not eaſy for thoſe whoſe habits of life are inſenſibly formed by the cuſtoms of modern times, to conceive any adequate idea of the paſtoral life, as it obtained in the eaſtern countries, before that ſimplicity of manners, which characterized the early ages, was corrupted by the artificial and falſe refinements of luxury. Wealth, in thoſe days, conſiſted principally in flocks and herds; and Abraham, Iſaac, Jacob, and others, who were, to ſpeak in modern language, perſons of high diſtinction, were likewiſe ſhepherds. The book of Geneſis, which is an authentic and infallible hiſtory of the moſt ancient times, exhibits a manner of living ſo different from our own, that, perhaps, few perſons are qualified to enter fully into the ſpirit of the deſcription. The poets ſeem to have derived their idea of the golden age from ſome imperfect tradition of this primitive ſtate; and if we compare it with the ſtate of things around us, methinks we have reaſon to ſay, *How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed* !* The opulence of Jacob may be conjectured from the preſent he ſent to his brother Eſau †. Yet Jacob attended his flocks himſelf, *in the drought by day, and in the froſt by night* ‡. The vigilance, the providence,

* Lam. iv. 1. † Gen. xxxii. 14. 15. ‡ Gen. xxxi. 40.

dence, the tenderneſs, neceſſary to the due diſcharge of the ſhepherd's office, have been frequently applied in deſcribing the nature and ends of government; and it has been eſteemed a high encomium of a good king, to ſtyle him the ſhepherd of his people. This character MESSIAH, the Saviour, condeſcends to bear; and happy are they, who, with a pleaſing conſciouſneſs, can ſay, *We are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture* *.

The paſſage will lead me to ſpeak of the ſhepherd, the flock, and his care and tenderneſs over them.

I. Our Lord expreſsly ſtyles himſelf the *Shepherd*, the *good Shepherd of the ſheep* †, and the Apoſtle Peter ſtyles him the *chief Shepherd* ‡. His faithful miniſters have the honour to be under ſhepherds; he appoints, and qualifies them to feed his flock. They are the meſſengers of his will, but they can do nothing without him; they can only communicate what they receive, and cannot watch over the flock, unleſs they are themſelves watched over by him ‖. For, with reſpect to efficacy, he is the chief, and indeed, the ſole Shepherd. The eyes of all are upon him, and *his* eye is upon, and over all his flock. The Old-Teſtament church had a ſhepherd, and their ſhepherd was Jehovah §. Unleſs therefore the Shepherd and Biſhop of our ſouls likewiſe be Jehovah, we fall unſpeakably ſhort of the privilege of ancient Iſrael, if their Shepherd was almighty, and if ours could be but a creature. Surely we could not then ſay, what yet the apoſtle affirms, that we have a *better covenant, eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes* **; ſince MESSIAH himſelf is expreſsly declared to be the ſurety and the mediator of this covenant. But would it not be better, upon this ſuppoſition, with David, who could ſay, Jehovah is my Shepherd, than with us, who are entruſted to the care of a delegated and inferior keeper, if Jeſus be not

* Pſal. c. 3. † John x. 11, 14. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 4.
‖ Pſal. cxxvii. 1. § Pſal xxiii. 1. ** Heb. viii. 6.

not Jehovah? Beſides, who but Jehovah can relieve the neceſſities of multitudes in all places, in the ſame moment, and be equally near and attentive to them in every age? The ſinner, who is enlightened to know himſelf, his wants, enemies, and dangers, will not dare to confide in any thing ſhort of an almighty arm. he needs a ſhepherd, who is full of wiſdom, full of care, full of power; able, like the ſun, to ſhine upon millions at once, and poſſeſſed of thoſe incommunicable attributes of Deity, omniſcience and omnipreſence. Such is our great Shepherd; and he is eminently the good Shepherd alſo, for he laid down his life for the ſheep, and has redeemed them to God by his own blood.

II. A *Shepherd* is a relative name; it has reference to a *flock*. This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom he loved from everlaſting, and whom having loved, he will love to the end *.

Formoſi pecoris cuſtos, formoſior ipſe!

He humbled himſelf for their ſakes, ſubmitted to partake of their nature and their ſorrows, took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh. He died for his ſheep, *the juſt for the unjuſt* †, to redeem them from the curſe of the law, from the guilt and dominion of ſin, from the power of Satan, and to bring them to God. They, by nature, are all *gone aſtray, every one to his own way* ‡: but having thus bought them with his blood, in his own appointed time, he ſeeks, finds, and reſtores his ſheep. By the power of his word and Spirit, he makes himſelf known to their hearts, cauſes them to hear and underſtand his voice, and guides them into his fold. Then they become his ſheep in the ſenſe of my text. They are under his immediate protection and government.

Conſidered as individuals, they are fitly deſcribed by the name of *ſheep*. A ſheep is a weak, defence-

* John xiii. 1. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Iſa. liii. 6.

leſs, improvident creature; prone to wander, and if once aſtray, is ſeldom known to return of its own accord. A ſheep has neither ſtrength to fight with the wolf, nor ſpeed to eſcape from him; nor has it the foreſight of the ant, to provide its own ſuſtenance. Such is our character, and our ſituation. Unable to take care of ourſelves, prone to wander from our reſting-place, expoſed to enemies which we can neither withſtand nor avoid, without reſource in ourſelves, and taught, by daily experience, the inſufficiency of every thing around us: Yet, if this Shepherd be our Shepherd, weak and helpleſs as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can ſay with David, *The Lord is my Shepherd*, we may make the ſame inferences which he did, *Therefore I ſhall not want: therefore I need not fear.*

Collectively they are a *flock.* They are not, indeed, in one place. They are ſcattered abroad, diſperſed through different ages and countries, ſeparated by ſeas and mountains, and, too often, by miſapprehenſions and prejudices, by names and forms; and only a very ſmall part of the flock are known to each other. But they are all equally known to him, and equally under his eye. In his view they are one flock, one body; they are animated by one and the ſame ſpirit; their views, hopes, and aims are the ſame; and, yet a little while, they ſhall be all brought together, a number without number, to rejoice and to join in worſhip, before his throne of glory. For they have an inheritance reſerved for them in heaven *, and they ſhall be ſafely kept, while they are ſojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Iſrael is their keeper.

III. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd.* The word is not reſtrained to feeding. It includes all the branches of the ſhepherd's office. He ſhall act the part of a ſhepherd to his flock. We have a beautiful miniature deſcription of what he has engaged to do,

* 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

do, and what he actually does, for his people, as their Shepherd, in the twenty-third Pſalm. And the ſubject is more largely illuſtrated in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. His ſheep, from age to age, have been witneſſes to the truth of his promiſes. He has a flock at preſent who rejoice in his care, and greater multitudes, as yet unborn, ſhall ſucceſſively ariſe in their appointed ſeaſons, *and call him bleſſed* *. For he is the *ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.*

He feeds them. He leads them into green and pleaſant paſtures. Theſe paſtures are, his word and ordinances, by which he communicates to them of his own fulneſs; for in ſtrict propriety of ſpeech, he himſelf is their food. They eat his fleſh and drink his blood †. This was once thought a hard ſaying ‡ by ſome of his profeſſed followers, and is ſtill thought ſo by too many. But it is his own ſaying, and therefore I am not concerned, either to confirm or to vindicate it. The knowledge they receive by faith, of his incarnation and ſufferings unto death, of the names he bears, and of the offices and relations in which he is pleaſed to act for them, is the life and food of their ſouls. The expreſſion of feeding them, is agreeable to the analogy he has been pleaſed to eſtabliſh between the natural and the ſpiritual life. As the ſtrength of the body is maintained and renewed by eating and drinking; ſo they who, in this ſenſe, feed upon him in their hearts by faith with thankſgiving, even *they* live § by him; *for his fleſh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.*

He guides them. Firſt by his example. He has trodden the path of duty and trial before them; and they perceive and follow his footſteps. Again, by his word and Spirit he teaches them the way in

* Pſal. lxxii. 17. † John vi. 54. ‡ John vi 58.
§ John vi. 57.

which they ſhould go; and both inclines and enables them to walk in it *. He guides them, likewiſe, by his providence; he appoints the bounds of their habitations, the line and calling in which they are to ſerve him, and orders and adjuſts the circumſtances of their lives according to his infinite wiſdom, ſo as, finally, to accompliſh his gracious deſigns in their favour.

He guards them It is written concerning him, *He ſhall ſtand and feed in the ſtrength of the Lord, in the majeſty of the name of the Lord his God* †. If we conceive of a flock of ſheep feeding in the midſt of wolves, who are reſtrained from breaking in upon them, not by any viſible incloſure, but merely by the power of the ſhepherd's eye, which keeps them in awe and at a diſtance, it will give us ſome idea of the ſituation of his people. He provides them food in the midſt of many and mighty ‡ enemies, who envy them their privilege, but cannot prevent it. If he ſhould withdraw his attention from the flock for a ſingle minute, they would be worried. But he has promiſed to keep them night and day ‖, and every moment; therefore their enemies plot and rage in vain. Their *viſible* foes are numerous; but if we could look into the *inviſible world*, and take a view of the ſubtilty, malice, machinations, and aſſiduity of the powers of darkneſs, who are inceſſantly watching for opportunities of annoying them, we ſhould have a moſt ſtriking conviction, that a flock ſo defenceleſs and feeble in themſelves, and againſt which ſuch a combination is formed, can only be kept by the power of God.

He heals them. A good ſhepherd will examine the ſtate of his flock. But there is no attention worthy of being compared with his. Not the ſlighteſt circumſtance in their concerns eſcapes his notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exerciſes of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and diſconſolate

* Iſ. xxx. 21. † Micah v. 4. ‡ Pſal. xxiii. 5. ‖ Iſ. xxvii. 3.

diſconſolate in their ſpirits, he ſeaſonably revives them. Nor are they in heavineſs without a need-be for it. All his diſpenſations towards them are medicinal, deſigned to correct, or to reſtrain, or to cure, the maladies of their ſouls. And they are adjuſted, by his wiſdom and tenderneſs, to what they can bear, and to what their caſe requires. It is he, likewiſe, who heals their bodily ſickneſs, and gives them help in all their temporal trouble. He is repreſented to us, as counting their ſighs *, putting their tears into his bottle, recording their ſorrows in his book of remembrance; and even as being himſelf *touched with a feeling of their infirmities* †, as the head feels for the members of the body.

He reſtores them. The power and ſubtilty of their enemies are employed to force or entice them from his rule, and too often prevail for a ſeaſon. The ſheep turn aſide into forbidden paths; and whenever they do, they would wander farther and farther, till they were quite loſt again, if he were not their Shepherd. If he permits them to deviate, he has a time to convince them, *that it was an evil and a bitter thing to forſake the Lord their Shepherd* ‡, and to humble them, and to bring them back. Thus they become more ſenſible of their own weakneſs, and of their obligations to his gracious care; for he will not ſuffer their enemies to triumph over them. He will not loſe one of his true flock; not one convinced ſinner, who has, in deed and in truth, ſurrendered and entruſted his all to him. They muſt, and they ſhall ſmart and mourn for their folly; but he will, in due ſeaſon, break their ſnares, and lead them again into the paths of peace, for his own name's ſake

The flock are not all *ſheep*. There are among them *lambs*. Theſe are eſpecially mentioned, and for theſe he expreſſes a peculiar tenderneſs. *He will gather them in his arm, and carry them in his boſom.*

* Pſal. lvi. 8. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ Jer. ii. 19.

Though they are weaklings, they ſhall not be left behind. This is a beautiful and pathetic image. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, it ſhall be carried. This clauſe affords encouragement,

1. *To young people.* Early ſerious impreſſions are often made upon the hearts of children, which we are to cheriſh, by directing their thoughts to the compaſſion of the good Shepherd, who has ſaid, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of ſuch is the kingdom of God.** This high and holy one, who humbles himſelf to notice the worſhip of the heavenly hoſt, hears the prayers of worms upon the earth; and his ear is open to the prayers of a child, no leſs ſo, than to the prayer of a king.

2. *To young converts.* Theſe, at whatever age, are children in the Lord's family, lambs in his flock. They are, as yet, weak, unſettled, and unexperienced. Almoſt every day brings them into a new and untried ſituation. They often meet with oppoſition and diſcouragement, where they have promiſed themſelves help and countenance. Perhaps their neareſt friends are diſpleaſed with them. They are liable, likewiſe, while they are enquiring the way to Zion, to be perplexed by the various opinions and angry contentions prevailing among the different religious perſons or parties to whom they may addreſs themſelves. They are frequently diſcouraged by the falls and miſcarriages of profeſſors, ſome of whom, it is poſſible, they may have admired, and looked up to, as patterns for their own imitation. Add to theſe things, what they ſuffer from new and unexpected diſcoveries of the evil and deceitfulneſs of their hearts; the miſtakes they commit, in judgment and practice, for want of a more ſolid and extenſive knowledge of the ſcriptures; and the advantage the great

* Mark x. 14.

great enemy of their ſouls derives from theſe their various difficulties to aſſault their peace and obſtruct their progreſs. What would become of them in ſuch circumſtances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promiſed to lead, and uphold them, with the arm of his power?

There is, likewiſe, particular mention made of *thoſe who are with young*. Theſe he will gently lead. If we take the word according to our verſion, it may ſignify a ſtate of conviction or trouble. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous* *, by which they are often wearied and heavy laden. But when their ſpirits are overwhelmed within them, he knoweth their path. Jacob would not permit his cattle, that were with young, to be † over-driven for one day, leſt they ſhould die. Much leſs will this good Shepherd ſuffer the burdened among his flock to be hurried and tempted beyond what they are able, or what he will enable them to bear.

But the word ſignifies, thoſe that *have young*, rather than thoſe that *are with young*. Two ſorts of perſons in the Lord's flock, who come under this deſcription, feel an eſpecial need of his compaſſion, tenderneſs, and patience.

1. He only knows the feelings of the hearts of *parents*; what ſolicitude and anxiety they have for their young ones, the ſucklings, if I may ſo ſpeak, of the flock, which mingle with all their endeavours, to manage rightly the important charge committed to them, and to bring their *children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

2. *Miniſters*, likewiſe, have painful exerciſes of mind. The Apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of *travelling in birth again, till Chriſt be formed in our hearers* ‡. When we know of any newly awakened, and beginning to ſeek his ſalvation, how ſolicitous is our care to bring them forward, to comfort them, to warn them againſt

* Pſal. xxxiv. 19. † Gen. xxxiii. 13. Gal iv. 19.

the devices of their hearts, and of their enemies! And how piercing our grief and disappointment, if they miscarry! How much is felt in sympathy for the trials of the flock! What wisdom, faithfulness, courage, meekness, and unction from on high, are necessary to the due discharge of what we owe to the flocks of which we have the oversight! Who is sufficient for these things! And when we have done our best, our all, what defects and defilements have we to mourn over! But this is our great consolation, that he, who knows us, and leads us, considers *our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.*

In this delineation of the character and conduct of the *Great Shepherd of the sheep* *, we have an affecting exemplar and pattern, for the imitation of those who act in the honourable office of under shepherds, and are called, by their profession and engagement, to feed his sheep and lambs. Whether there be any ministers in our assembly, or not, you will at least permit me to speak a word to my own heart; which may, I hope, at the same time, impress your minds with a sense of our great need of your prayers *Brethren, pray for us* †! *and pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth more faithful labourers into his harvest* ‡. For it is his work alone. It is not necessary, that a minister of the gospel should be in the first line of those who are admired for their abilities or literature; much less that he should be distinguished by such titles, honours, and emoluments as this world can give. But it is necessary, and of the last importance to his character and usefulness here, and to his acceptance in the great day of the Lord, that he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart. He must serve the flock, *not for filthy lucre, or by constraint* ‖, (that constraint, which the apostle attributes to the love of Christ, only excepted), *but willingly*, and with a view

* Heb. xiii. 20. † 1 Thess. v. 25. ‡ Matt. ix. 38. ‖ 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

view to their edification. And he muſt, indeed, *ſerve* them, not acting as a *lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock*; not preaching *himſelf**, perverting his ſacred office to the purpoſes of ambition or vain-glory, or the acquiſition of wealth; but preaching Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn ſinners from the error of their ways. *He who winneth ſouls is wiſe*†. If it be wiſdom to propoſe the nobleſt end, the faithful miniſter is wiſe; the end at which he aims, in ſubordination to the will and glory of God, is the ſalvation of ſouls; and the recovery of one immortal ſoul to the favour and image of God, is, and will at length be found, a greater and more important event, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from ſlavery or temporal ruin. If it be wiſdom, to purſue a right end by the fitteſt means, he is wiſe; he knows the goſpel of Chriſt to be the power of God, the appointed, the effectual, the only ſufficient mean for accompliſhing his great purpoſe; therefore, however unfaſhionable it may be, he is not aſhamed of it, he preaches it, and he glories in it. If it be an effect of wiſdom, not to be deterred from the proſecution of a great and noble deſign, by the cenſure and diſlike of weak and incompetent judges, the faithful miniſter is truly wiſe. He loves his fellow-creatures, and would willingly pleaſe them for their good, but he cannot fear them, becauſe he fears and ſerves the Lord. He looks forward, with deſire, to the day of that ſolemn and general viſitation, when the *Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls ſhall himſelf appear*‡. And if he may then ſtand among thoſe who are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved, and receive the *crown of life, which his Lord has promiſed to them that love him* ‖,—this thought fully reconciles him to the trials of his ſituation; and however depreciated, miſrepreſented, oppoſed, or ill-treated here, he can ſay, *None of theſe things*

* 2 Cor. iv. 5. † Prov. xi. 30. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 4. ‖ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

things move me, neither count I my life dear to myſelf; ſo that I may finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God *.

There is a counter-part to this character deſcribed in ſtrong and glowing language by the prophets. There are idol ſhepherds, who feed not the flock, but themſelves †; who neither attempt to heal the ſick, to ſtrengthen the feeble, to bind up that which is broken, nor to recover that which has been driven away; ſhepherds ‡, who cannot underſtand, greedy, lovers of gain—and who, by a change of metaphor, are compared to ſlumbering watchmen, and dumb dogs that cannot bark. The New Teſtament teaches us to expect that ſuch perſons, under the name of miniſters, will be found likewiſe in the viſible church of Chriſt; men of corrupt minds ‖, deſtitute of the truth, who ſerve not the Lord Jeſus, but their own belly; men who are of the world §, and ſpeak of the world; and therefore the world heareth and favoureth them. But, alas!—neither the wretched ſlave who toils at the galley-oar, nor he that is doomed to labour in a deep mine, where the light of the ſun never reaches him, nor the lunatic who howls in a chain, are ſuch emphatical objects of our compaſſion, as the unhappy man who proſtitutes the name and function of a miniſter of Chriſt to the gratification of his pride and avarice; and whoſe object is not the welfare of the flock, but the poſſeſſion of the fleece; who ¶ intrudes into the poſt of a watchman, but gives no alarm of the impending danger. If the ſcriptures be true; if the goſpel be not indeed, as Pope Leo the Tenth profanely ſtyled it, a lucrative fable; the more he accumulates riches, the more he riſes in dignity, the more his influence extends, the more he is to be commiſerated. He may have the reward he

* Acts xx. 24. † Ezek. xxxiv. 2. ‡ Iſ. lvi. 10, 11.
‖ 1 Tim. vi. 5. Rom. xvi. 18. § 1 John iv. 5. ¶ Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.

he ſeeks: He may be admired and flattered; he may, for a ſeaſon, be permitted to withſtand and diſcountenance the efforts of the Lord's faithful ſervants; he may ſhine in the accompliſhments of a ſcholar or a courtier: But nothing leſs than repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, whoſe name and cauſe he has diſhonoured, can finally ſcreen him from the full effect of that terrible denunciation—*Wo to the idol ſhepherd that forſaketh* (or neglecteth) *the flock: The ſword ſhall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: His arm ſhall be clean dried up, and his right eye ſhall be utterly darkened* *.

* Zech. xi. 17.

SERMON XIV.

Reſt for the Weary.

MATT. xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.

WHICH ſhall we admire moſt; the majeſty, or the grace, conſpicuous in this invitation? How ſoon would the greateſt earthly monarch be impoveriſhed, and his treaſures utterly exhauſted, if all that are poor and miſerable had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promiſe of relief fully anſwerable to their wants and wiſhes! But the riches of Chriſt are unſearchable and inexhauſtible. If millions of millions of diſtreſſed ſinners ſeek to *him* for relief, he has a ſufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all their ſins; his grace is infinite to anſwer and exceed their utmoſt deſires; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number without number have been thus waiting upon him, from age to age; and not one of them has been ſent away diſappointed and empty. And the ſtreams of his bounty are ſtill flowing, and ſtill full. Thus the ſun, his brighteſt material image, has been the ſource of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants, from the creation; and will be equally ſo to all ſucceeding generations, till time ſhall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour when the ſun ſhall ceaſe to ſhine, and the courſe of nature ſhall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of Righteouſneſs *, has no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning; and they who

* Mal. iv. 2. [illegible]

who depend upon him while in this world, ſhall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we heſitate to accept of theſe words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour; ſuppoſing only, that he meant what he ſaid, and that he is able to make his promiſe good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, uſe this language? Can a creature diſcharge the debts, ſooth the diſtreſſes, and ſatisfy the deſires of every individual who looks to him? Who but the Lord God * can raiſe up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn!

Again, as is his majeſty, ſo is his mercy. In acts of grace amongſt men there are always ſome limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are ſtill exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obſtinacy or influence are ſuppoſed to be too great, to render their ſafety conſiſtent with the ſafety of the ſtate. But the Saviour excludes none but thoſe who wilfully exclude themſelves. As no caſe is too hard for his power, ſo no perſon who applies to him is ſhut out from his compaſſion. *Him that cometh to him*, whatever his former character or conduct may have been, *he will in no wiſe caſt out* †. This glorious exerciſe of ſovereign mercy is no leſs a divine attribute, than the power by which he created the heavens and the earth. It is the conſideration of his mercy in pardoning ſin, and in ſaving ſinners, which cauſes that admiring exclamation of the prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee* ‡?

This paſſage (including the two following verſes) cloſes the firſt part of the Oratorio. In tracing the ſeries of the ſcriptures thus far, we have conſidered ſeveral ſignal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have ſeen their accompliſhment in his birth, and have (I hope) joined with the heavenly hoſt, in aſcribing

* Pſal. cxlvi 8 Iſ. lxi. 2. † John vi. 37. ‡ Micah vii. 18.

aſcribing glory to God in the higheſt, for this unſpeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets, his characters, as the great Reſtorer, and the great Shepherd. The Evangeliſt propoſes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commiſſion, proclaiming his own ſovereign authority and power, and declaring his compaſſionate purpoſe, and readineſs to give refreſhment and reſt to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the *Invitation*, and the *Promiſe*.

I. The *Invitation* is expreſſed in very general terms. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.* There is no qualifying or reſtraining clauſe, to diſcourage any perſon who is willing to accept it. Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. *Let him that is athirſt come, and whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* *. I cannot doubt but theſe words authoriſe me to addreſs myſelf to every perſon in the aſſembly. I ſpeak firſt to you who are *ſpending your money for that which ſatisfieth not* †; who are wearied in ſeeking happineſs where it is not to be found, and *in digging pits, and hewing out ciſterns for yourſelves, which could hold no water* ‡, and have hitherto been regardleſs *of the fountain of living waters*, which is always near you. While you are purſuing the wealth or honours of this world, or waſting your time and ſtrength in the indulgence of ſenſual appetites, and look no higher, are you, indeed, happy and ſatisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the *paths of pleaſantneſs and peace* ‖? With what face can you charge the profeſſors of religion with hypocriſy, if you pretend to ſatisfaction in theſe ways? We have trodden them far enough ourſelves, to be aſſured

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Iſ. lv. 2. ‡ Jer. ii. 13. ‖ Prov. iii. 7.

aſſured that there are feelings in your heart which contradict your aſſertion. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewiſe. Are you quite ſtrangers to a ſecret wiſh, that you had never been born? or that you could change condition with ſome of the brute creation? *Are you not heavy laden*, burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings; haraſſed with croſſes, diſappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at leaſt ſometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone; unable to ſupport the reflections which are forced upon you in a ſolitary hour, when you have nothing to amuſe you? And while you ſeem ſo alert, and upon the wing, after every kind of diſſipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a deſire, if poſſible, of hiding yourſelves from yourſelves, and of calling off your attention from thoſe thoughts, which, like vultures, are ready to ſeize you, and prey upon you, the moment they find you unemployed? And how often do your poor expedients fail you, eſpecially in a time of trouble, or on a ſick-bed? What comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions of your vain and gay hours? Moſt probably, at ſuch a ſeaſon, they ſtand aloof from you; the houſe of mourning, or the chamber of ſickneſs, are no leſs unpleaſing to them than to yourſelf. They do not chuſe the pain of being reminded, by a ſight of your diſtreſs, how ſoon the caſe may be their own. Or, if they viſit you, you find them miſerable comforters. But I have to ſpeak to you of one who is able to comfort you, in all ſeaſons, and under all circumſtances; whoſe favour is better than life. And will you ſtill refuſe to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him, for that peace and reſt to which you have hitherto been ſtrangers. But though you are invited, I know that of yourſelves you will not come; you *will* not, and therefore,

therefore, you cannot. Be aſſured, however, the invitation does not mock you; and if you finally refuſe it, the fault will lie at your own doors. But may I not hope you will refuſe no longer? The preaching of the goſpel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make *a willing people in the day of his power.*

There are others, however, to whom this invitation ſpeaks more directly. The convinced ſinner is *heavy laden* with the guilt of ſin, and *wearied* with ineffectual ſtrivings againſt it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither anſwer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor ſee any way of eſcaping the penalty which is due to tranſgreſſors. He ſighs earneſtly and anxiouſly for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from ſome occaſional fervour and livelineſs in the frame of his ſpirit, than from the exerciſe of faith; and therefore, as that fervour abates, (and it will not always remain at the ſame height), his fears return. If in ſuch a favoured moment he feels little ſolicitation or trouble from the evil propenſities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are ſubdued; and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is ſhort, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the ſupplies of his Spirit, can give ſtable peace to the mind, or victory over ſin. A repetition of theſe diſappointments and changes fixes a heavy burden and diſtreſs upon the mind. But here is help provided exactly ſuitable to the caſe. Comply with this invitation, *Come to him, and he will ſurely give you reſt.*

But what is it *to come to Chriſt?* It is, to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promiſe

promiſe our ground and warrant for putting our truſt in him On another occaſion, he ſaid, *He that cometh to me ſhal never hunger, and he that believeth in me ſhall never thirſt* *. The expreſſions are of the ſame import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a ſeaſon, received no ſaving benefit from him. Some came to him from motives of malice and ill-will, to enſnare or inſult him. Some followed him for loaves and fiſhes; and of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life* †. But they who were diſtreſſed, and came to him for relief, were not diſappointed. *To come to him*, therefore, implies a knowledge of his power, and an application for his help. To us he is not viſible, but he is always near us; and as he appointed his diſciples to meet him in Galilee ‡ previous to his aſcenſion, ſo he has promiſed to be found of thoſe who ſeek him, and wait for him, in certain means of his own inſtitution. He is ſeated upon a throne of grace; he is to be ſought in his word, and where his people aſſemble in his name, for he has ſaid, *There will I be in the midſt of them* ‖. They therefore who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a deſire that they may know him, and *be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people* §, anſwer the deſign of my text. They come to him, and he aſſures them, that whoever they are, he will in no wiſe caſt them out. If they thus come to him, they will of courſe *come out from the world and be ſeparate* **. If they apply to him for refuge, they will renounce all other refuge and dependence, and truſt in him alone; according to the words of the prophet, *Aſſhur ſhall not ſave us, we will not ride upon horſes, neither will we ſay any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our*

* John vi. 35. † John v. 40. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 16.
‖ Matt. xviii. 20. § Pſal. cvi. 4. ** 2 Cor. vi. 17.

our gods, for in thee the fatherleſs (the helpleſs and comfortleſs) *findeth mercy* *.

II. The promiſe is, *I will give you reſt* †. The word ſignifies both reſt and refreſhment. He gives a relief and ceſſation from former labour and bondage, and ſuperadds a peace, a joy, a comfort, which revives the weary ſpirit, and proves itſelf to be that very ſatisfaction which the ſoul had been ignorantly and in vain ſeeking amongſt the creatures and the objects of ſenſe.

This *reſt* includes a freedom from the forebodings and diſtreſſing accuſations of a guilty conſcience; from the long and fruitleſs ſtruggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconſiſtent appetites; and from the dominion of pride and ſelf, which make us unhappy in ourſelves, and hated and deſpiſed by others: A freedom likewiſe from the cares and anxieties, which, in ſuch an uncertain world as this, diſquiet the minds of thoſe who have no ſolid ſcriptural dependence upon God, and eſpecially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In theſe and other reſpects, the believer in Jeſus enters into a preſent reſt. He is under the guidance of infinite wiſdom, and the protection of almighty power; he is permitted to *caſt all his cares upon the Lord* ‡, and is aſſured that the Lord *careth for him*. So far as he poſſeſſes by faith the ſpirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The Prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful deſcription and illuſtration of this reſt of a believer ‖; which is rendered more ſtriking by being contraſted with the miſerable ſtate of thoſe who live without God in the world. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Curſed is the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth*

* Hoſ. xiv. 3 Philem. 7. 20.
† Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 18. 2 Cor. vii. 13.
‡ 1 Pet. v. 7.
‖ Jer. xvii. 5,—8.

parteth from the Lord. For he ſhall be like the heath in the deſert, and ſhall not ſee when good cometh, but ſhall inhabit the parched places of the wilderneſs, in a ſalt land not inhabited. But *Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is; for he ſhall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that ſpreadeth out her roots by the river, and ſhall not ſee when the heat cometh; but her leaf ſhall be green, and ſhall not be careful in the year of drought, neither ſhall ceaſe from yielding fruit.*

But beſides *reſt*, there is *refreſhment*. There are pleaſures and conſolations in that intercourſe and communion with God to which we are invited by the goſpel, which, both in kind and degree, are unſpeakably ſuperior to all that the world can beſtow, and ſuch as the world cannot deprive us of; for they have no neceſſary dependance upon outward ſituation or circumſtances; they are compatible with poverty, ſickneſs, and ſufferings. They are often moſt ſenſibly ſweet and lively, when the ſtreams of creature-comfort are at the loweſt ebb. Many have been able to ſay with the apoſtle, *As the ſufferings of Chriſt* (thoſe which we endure for his ſake, or ſubmit to from his hand) *abound in us, ſo our conſolation in Chriſt alſo aboundeth* *. The all-ſufficient God can increaſe theſe communications of comfort from himſelf, to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions, ſo as not only to ſupport his people under the moſt exquiſite pains, but even to ſuſpend and overpower all ſenſe of pain, when the torment would otherwiſe be extreme. And he has ſometimes been pleaſed to honour the fidelity of his ſervants, and to manifeſt his own faithfulneſs to them by ſuch an interpoſition. One well-atteſted inſtance our own martyrology affords, that of Mr Bainham, who ſuffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When he was in the fire, he addreſſed himſelf to his perſecutors to this

* 2 Cor. i. 5.

this effect: "You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine, now behold one; I feel no more pain from theſe flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roſes." But in ordinary caſes, and in all caſes, they who taſte how good the Lord is to them that ſeek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what ſupports he affords them in the hour of need, can without regret part with the poor periſhing pleaſures of ſin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profeſſion of his name, and their attachment to his cauſe, may have coſt them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come therefore unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you ſhall find reſt for your ſouls! Can the world outbid this gracious offer? Can the world promiſe to give you reſt, when you are burdened with trouble? when your ciſterns fail, and your gourds wither? or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulſe intermits, when you are about to take a final farewel of all you ever ſaw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view? Such a moment moſt certainly awaits you; and when it arrives, if you die in your ſenſes, and are not judicially given up to hardneſs and blindneſs of heart, you will aſſuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. Oh! be perſuaded; may the Lord himſelf perſuade you to be timely wiſe, to ſeek him now while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near; leſt that dreadful threatening ſhould be your portion: *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand and no man regarded; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* *.

* Prov. i. 24, 26.

SER-

SERMON XV.

Meſſiah's Eaſy Yoke.

MATT. xi. 29, 30.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light.

THOUGH the influence of education and example may diſpoſe us to acknowledge the goſpel to be a revelation from God, it can only be rightly underſtood, or duly prized, by thoſe perſons who feel themſelves in the circumſtances of diſtreſs which it is deſigned to relieve. No Iſraelite would think of fleeing to a city of refuge *, till, by having unwittingly ſlain a man, he was expoſed to the reſentment of the next of kin, the legal avenger of blood; but then, a ſenſe of his danger would induce him readily to avail himſelf of the appointed method of ſafety. The ſkill of a phyſician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many; but he is applied to only by the ſick †. Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to him for reſt, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourſelves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reaſon why the goſpel is heard with ſo much indifference. For though ſin be a grievous illneſs, and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a ſtrange ſtupidity and infatuation, which renders us (like a perſon in a delirium) inſenſible of our true ſtate. It is a happy time, when the Holy Spirit, by his convincing power, removes that ſtupor, which, while it prevents

* Joſh. xx. 2, 3. † Matt. ix. 12.

vents us from fully perceiving our miſery, renders us likewiſe indifferent to the only mean of deliverance. Such a conviction of the guilt and deſert of ſin, is the firſt hopeful ſympton in a ſinner's caſe; but it is neceſſarily painful and diſtreſſing. It is not pleaſant to be weary and heavy laden; but it awakens our attention to him who ſays, *Come unto me, and I will give you reſt*, and makes us willing to take his yoke upon us.

Oxen are yoked to labour. From hence the *yoke* is a figurative expreſſion to denote ſervitude. Our Lord ſeems to uſe it here, both to intimate our natural prejudices againſt his ſervice, and to obviate them. Though he ſubmitted to ſufferings, reproach, and death for our ſakes; though he invites us, not becauſe he has need of us, but becauſe we have need of him, and cannot be happy without him; yet our ungrateful hearts think unkindly of him. We conceive of him as a hard maſter; and ſuppoſe, that if we engage ourſelves to him, we muſt bid farewell to pleaſure, and live under a continual reſtraint. His rule is deemed too ſtrict, his laws too ſevere; and we imagine, that we could be more happy upon our own plans, than by acceding to his. Such unjuſt, unfriendly, and diſhonourable thoughts of him, whoſe heart is full of tenderneſs, whoſe bowels melt with love, are ſtrong proofs of our baſeneſs, blindneſs, and depravity; yet ſtill he continues his invitation, *Come unto me*—As if he had ſaid, "Be not afraid of me. Only make the experiment, and you ſhall find, that what you have accounted my *yoke* is true liberty; and that in my ſervice, which you have avoided as burdenſome, there is no burden at all; *for my ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all my paths are peace.*" I have a good hope, that many of my hearers can teſtify, from their own happy experience, that (according to the beautiful expreſſion in our liturgy) his ſervice is perfect freedom.

If

If we are really Chriſtians, Jeſus is our Maſter, our Lord, and we are his ſervants. It is in vain to call him *Lord, Lord* *, unleſs we keep his commandments. They who know him will love him; and they who love him will deſire to pleaſe him, not by a courſe of ſervice of their own deviſing, but by accepting his revealed will as the ſtandard and rule, to every part of which they endeavour to conform in their tempers and in their conduct. He is likewiſe our Maſter in another ſenſe, that is, he is our great Teacher; if we ſubmit to him as ſuch, we are his *diſciples* or *ſcholars*. We cannot ſerve him acceptably, unleſs we are taught by him. The philoſophers of old had their diſciples, who imbibed their ſentiments, and were therefore called after their names, as the Pythagoreans and Platoniſts, from Pythagoras and Plato. The general name of Chriſtians, which was firſt aſſumed by the believers at Antioch †, (poſſibly by divine direction), intimates that they are the profeſſed diſciples of Chriſt. If we wiſh to be truly wiſe, to be wiſe unto ſalvation, we muſt apply to him. For in this ſenſe, the *diſciple* or *ſcholar cannot be above his Maſter* ‡. We can learn of men no more than they can teach us. But he ſays, *Learn of me*; and he cautions us againſt calling any one Maſter upon earth. He does, indeed, inſtruct his people by miniſters and inſtruments; but unleſs he is pleaſed to ſuperadd his influence, what we ſeem to learn from them only, will profit us but little. Nor are the beſt of them ſo thoroughly furniſhed, nor ſo free from miſtake, as to deſerve our implicit confidence. But they whom *he* condeſcends to teach, ſhall learn what no inſtruction, merely human, can impart. Let us conſider the peculiar, the unſpeakable advantages of being his ſcholars.

1. In

* Luke vi. 46. † Acts xi. 26. ‡ Luke vi. 40.

1. In the firſt place, this great Teacher *can give the capacity* requiſite to the reception of his ſublime inſtructions. There is no proſpect of excelling in human arts and ſciences, without a previous natural ability, ſuited to the ſubject. For inſtance, if a perſon has not an ear and taſte for muſic, he will make but ſmall proficiency under the beſt maſters. It will be the ſame with reſpect to the mathematics, or any branch of ſcience. A ſkilful maſter may improve and inform the ſcholar, if he be rightly diſpoſed to learn, but he cannot communicate the diſpoſition. But Jeſus can open and enliven the dulleſt mind; he teaches the blind to ſee, and the deaf to hear. By nature we are untractable, and incapable of reliſhing divine truth, however advantageouſly propoſed to us by men like ourſelves. But happy are his ſcholars! he enables them to ſurmount all difficulties. He takes away the heart of ſtone, ſubdues the moſt obſtinate prejudices, enlightens the dark underſtanding, and inſpires a genius and a taſte for the ſublime and intereſting leſſons he propoſes to them. In this reſpect, as in every other, there is none *teacheth like him* *.

2. He teacheth *the moſt important things.* The ſubjects of human ſcience are comparatively trivial and inſignificant. We may be ſafely ignorant of them all. And we may acquire the knowledge of them all, without being wiſer or better, with reſpect to the concernments of our true happineſs. Experience and obſervation abundantly confirm the remark of Solomon, *That he who increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow. The eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the ear with hearing* † Unleſs the heart be ſeaſoned and ſanctified by grace, the ſum-total of all other acquiſitions is but *vanity and vexation of ſpirit* ‡. Human learning will neither ſupport the mind under trouble, nor weaken its attachment to worldly

* Job xxxvi. 26. † Eccleſ. i. 8, 18. ‡ Eccleſ. ii. 17.

worldly things, nor controul its impetuous paſſions, nor overcome the fear of death. The confeſſion of the learned Grotius, towards the cloſe of a life ſpent in literary purſuits, is much more generally known than properly attended to. He had deſervedly a great name and reputation as a ſcholar; but his own reflection upon the reſult of his labours expreſſes what he learnt, not from his books and ordinary courſe of ſtudies, but from the Teacher I am commending to you. He lived to leave this teſtimony for the admonition of the learned, or to this effect: *Ah, vitam prorſus perdidi nihil agendo laborioſe.* "Alas! I have waſted my whole life in taking much pains to no purpoſe." But Jeſus makes his ſcholars wiſe unto eternal life, and reveals that knowledge to babes, to perſons of weak and confined abilities, of which the wiſdom of the world can form no idea.

3. Other teachers, as I have already hinted, can only inform the *head*; but his inſtructions influence the *heart*. Moral philoſophers, as they are called, abound in fine words and plauſible ſpeeches, concerning the beauty of virtue, the fitneſs of things, temperance, benevolence, and equity; and their ſcholars learn to talk after them. But their fine and admired ſentiments are mere empty notions, deſtitute of life and efficacy, and frequently leave them as much under the tyranny of pride, paſſion, ſenſuality, envy, and malice, as any of the vulgar whom they deſpiſe for their ignorance. It is well known, to the diſgrace of the morality which the world applauds, that ſome of their moſt admired ſentimental writers and teachers have deſerved to be numbered among the moſt abandoned and deſpicable of mankind. They have been ſlaves to the baſeſt and moſt degrading appetites, and the tenor of their lives has been a marked contradiction to their fine-ſpun theories. But Jeſus Chriſt effectually teaches

his diſciples to forſake and abhor whatever is contrary to rectitude or purity; and inſpires them with love, power, and a ſound mind. And if they do not talk of great things, they are enabled to perform them. Their lives are exemplary and uſeful, their deaths comfortable, and their memory is precious.

4. The diſciples of Jeſus are, or may be, *always learning*. His providence and wiſdom have ſo diſpoſed things, in ſubſerviency to the purpoſes of his grace, that the whole world around them is as a great ſchool, and the events of every day, with which they are connected, have a tendency and ſuitableneſs, if rightly improved, to promote their inſtruction. Heavenly leſſons are taught and illuſtrated by earthly objects; nor are we capable of underſtanding them at preſent, unleſs the mode of inſtruction be thus accommodated to our ſituation and weakneſs. The ſcripture * points out to us a wonderful and beautiful analogy between the outward viſible world of nature, and that ſpiritual ſtate which is called the kingdom of God; the former is like a book written in cypher, to which the ſcripture is the key, which when we obtain, we have the other opened to us. Thus, wherever they look, ſome object preſents itſelf, which is adapted, either to lead their thoughts directly to Jeſus, or to explain or confirm ſome paſſage in his word. So, likewiſe, the incidents of human life; the characters we know, the converſation we hear, the viciſſitudes which take place in families, cities, and nations, in a word, the occurrences which furniſh the hiſtory of every day, afford a perpetual commentary on what the ſcriptures teach concerning the heart of man and the ſtate of the world, as ſubject to vanity, and lying in wickedneſs; and thereby the great truths which it behoves us to underſtand and remember, are more repeatedly and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and

* John iii. 12.

and brought home to our boſoms. It is the peculiar advantage of the diſciples of Chriſt, that their leſſons are always before them, and their Maſter always with them.

5. Men who are otherwiſe competently qualified for teaching in the branches of ſcience they profeſs, often diſcourage and intimidate their ſcholars, by the impatience, auſterity, and diſtance of their manner. They fail in that condeſcenſion and gentleneſs which are neceſſary to engage the attention and affection of the timid and the volatile, or gradually to ſoften and to ſhame the perverſe. Even Moſes, though eminent for his forbearance towards the obſtinate people committed to his care, and though he loved them, and longed for their welfare, was, at times, almoſt wearied by them *. But Jeſus, who knows before-hand the weakneſs, the dulneſs, and the refractorineſs of thoſe whom he deigns to teach, to prevent their fears, is pleaſed to ſay, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.* With what meekneſs did he converſe among his diſciples, while he was with them upon earth? He allowed them at all times a gracious freedom of acceſs. He bore with their miſtakes, reproved and corrected them with the greateſt mildneſs, and taught them as they were able to bear, with a kind accommodation to their prejudices; leading them on ſtep by ſtep, and waiting for the proper ſeaſon of unfolding to them thoſe more difficult points, which, for a time, appeared to them to be hard ſayings. And though he be now exalted upon his glorious throne and clothed with majeſty, ſtill his heart is made of tenderneſs, and his compaſſions ſtill abound. We are ſtill directed to think of him, not as one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but as exerciſing the ſame patience and ſympathy towards his diſciples now, which ſo ſignally marked his charac-

* Numb. xi. 11, 12.

ter during his ſtate of humiliation. The compliment of the orator to a Roman emperor, though exceſſive and abſurd when addreſſed to a ſinful worm, That they who durſt ſpeak to him were ignorant of his greatneſs, and they who durſt not were equally ignorant of his goodneſs, is a juſt and literal truth, if applied to our meek and gracious Saviour. If we duly conſider his greatneſs alone, it ſeems almoſt preſumption in ſuch creatures as we are, to dare to take his holy name upon our polluted lips; but then, if we have a proportionable ſenſe of his unbounded goodneſs and grace, every difficulty is over-ruled, and we feel a liberty of drawing near to him, though with reverence, yet with the confidence of children when they ſpeak to an affectionate parent.

A perſon may be *meek*, though in an elevated ſituation of life; but Jeſus was likewiſe *lowly*. There was nothing in his external appearance to intimidate the poor and the miſerable from coming to him. He was lowly or humble. Cuſtom, which fixes the force and acceptation of words, will not readily allow us to ſpeak of humility as applicable to the great God. Yet it is ſaid, *He humbleth himſelf to behold the things that* are *in heaven and in earth* *. Humility, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, is an attribute of magnanimity; an indifference to the little diſtinctions by which weak and vulgar minds are affected. In the view of the *high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity* †, all diſtinctions that can obtain among creatures vaniſh; and he humbles himſelf no leſs to notice the worſhip of an angel, than the fall of a ſparrow to the ground. But we more uſually expreſs this idea by the term *condeſcenſion*. Such was the mind that was in Chriſt ‡. It belonged to his dignity, as Lord of all, to look with an equal eye upon all his creatures. None could recommend themſelves

* Pſal. cxiii. 6. † Iſ. lvii. 15. ‡ Phil. ii. 5.

ſelves to him by their rank, wealth, or abilities, the gifts of his own bounty; none were excluded from his regard, by the want of thoſe things which are in eſtimation among men. And to ſtain the pride of human glory, he was pleaſed to aſſume an humble ſtate. *Though he was rich, he made himſelf poor* *, for the ſake of thoſe whom he came into the world to ſave. In this reſpect he teaches us by his example. *He took upon him the form of a ſervant* †, a poor and obſcure man, to abaſe our pride, to cure us of ſelfiſhneſs, and to reconcile us to the croſs.

The happy effect of his inſtructions upon thoſe who receive them, is, *Reſt to their ſouls.* This has been ſpoken to before; but as it is repeated in the text, I ſhall not entirely paſs it over here. He gives reſt to our ſouls,—By reſtoring us to our proper ſtate of dependence upon God; a ſtate of reconciliation and peace, and deliverance from guilt and fear; a ſtate of ſubjection; for till our wills are duly ſubjected to the will of God, we can have no reſt—By ſhewing us the vanity of the world, and thereby putting an end to our wearieſome deſires and purſuits after things uncertain, frequently unattainable, always unſatisfying—By a communication of ſublimer pleaſures and hopes than the preſent ſtate of things can poſſibly afford—And laſtly, by furniſhing us with thoſe aids, motives, and encouragements, which make our duty deſirable, practicable, and pleaſant.

How truly then may it be ſaid, that *his yoke is eaſy, and his burden light!* ſuch a burden as wings are to a bird, raiſing the ſoul above the low and grovelling attachments to which it was once confined. They only can rightly judge of the value of this reſt, who are capable of conſtraſting it with the diſtractions and miſeries, the remorſe and forebodings, of thoſe who live without God in the world.

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Phil. ii. 7.

But we are all, by profeſſion, his ſcholars. Ought we not ſeriouſly to enquire, what we have actually learned from him? Surely the proud, the haughty, the voluptuous, and the worldly, though they have heard of his name, and may have attended on his inſtitutions, have not hitherto ſat at his feet, or drank of his Spirit. It requires no long train of examination to determine, whether you have entered into his reſt, or not; or, if you have not yet attained it, whether you are ſeeking it in the ways of his appointment. It is a reſt for the ſoul, it is a ſpiritual bleſſing, and therefore does not neceſſarily depend upon external circumſtances. Without this reſt, you muſt be reſtleſs and comfortleſs in a palace. If you have it, you may be, at leaſt comparatively, happy in a dungeon. To-day, if not before, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice; and while he ſays to you by his word, *Come unto me, and learn of me*, let your hearts anſwer, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God* *.

* Jer. iii. 22.

PART

PART II.

SERMON XVI.

The Lamb of God, the Great Atonement.

JOHN i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world!

GREAT and marvellous are the works of the Lord God Almighty! We live in the midſt of them, and the little impreſſion they make upon us ſufficiently proves our depravity. He is great in the very ſmalleſt; and there is not a plant, flower, or inſect, but bears the ſignature of infinite wiſdom and power. How ſenſibly then ſhould we be affected by the conſideration of the *Whole*, if ſin had not blinded our underſtandings, and hardened our hearts! In the beginning, when all was dark, unformed, and waſte, his powerful word produced light, life, beauty, and order. He commanded the ſun to ſhine, and the planets to roll. The immenſity of creation is far beyond the reach of our conceptions. The innumerable ſtars; the worlds, which, however large in themſelves, are, from their remoteneſs, but barely viſible, to us are of little more immediate and known uſe, than to enlarge our idea of the greatneſs of their Author. Small, indeed, is the knowledge we have of our own ſyſtem; but we know enough to render our indifference inexcuſable. The glory of the ſun muſt ſtrike every eye; and in this enlightened age, there are few perſons but have ſome ideas of the magnitude of the planets, and the rapidity and regularity of their motions. Farther, the

rich variety which adorns this lower creation, the dependence and relation of the ſeveral parts, and their general ſubſerviency to the accommodation of man, the principal inhabitant, together with the preſervation of individuals, and the continuance of every ſpecies of animals, are ſubjects not above the reach of common capacities, and which afford almoſt endleſs and infinite ſcope for reflection and admiration. But the bulk of mankind regard them not. The viciſſitudes of day and night, and of the revolving ſeaſons, are to them matters of courſe, as if they followed each other without either cauſe or deſign. And though the philoſophers, who profeſſedly attach themſelves to the ſtudy of the works of nature, are overwhelmed by the traces of a wiſdom and arrangement which they are unable to comprehend, yet few of them are led to reverential thoughts of God, by their boaſted knowledge of his creatures. Thus men *live without God in the world, though they live, and move, and have their being in him,* and are inceſſantly ſurrounded by the moſt ſtriking proofs of his preſence and energy. Perhaps an earthquake, or a hurricane, by awakening their fears, may force upon their minds a conviction of his power over them, and excite an occaſional momentary application to him; but when they think the danger over, they relapſe into their former ſtupidity.

What can engage the attention, or ſoften the obduracy of ſuch creatures? Behold one wonder more, greater than all the former; the laſt, the higheſt effect of divine goodneſs! God has ſo loved rebellious, ungrateful ſinners, as to appoint them a Saviour in the perſon of his only Son. The prophets foreſaw his manifeſtation in the fleſh, and foretold the happy conſequences—that his preſence would change the wilderneſs into a fruitful field, that he was coming to give ſight to the blind, and

life

life to the dead; to ſet the captive at liberty; to unlooſe the heavy burden; and to bleſs the weary with reſt. But this change was not to be wrought merely by a word of power, as when he ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light* *. It was great, to ſpeak the world from nothing; but far greater, to redeem ſinners from miſery. The ſalvation, of which he is the Author, though free to us, muſt coſt him dear. Before the *mercy* of God can be actually diſpenſed to ſuch offenders, the rights of his *juſtice*, the demands of his law, and the honour of his government, muſt be provided for. The early inſtitution and long continued uſe of ſacrifices, had clearly pointed out the neceſſity of an atonement; but the real and proper atonement could only be made by MESSIAH. The blood of ſlaughtered animals could not take away ſin, nor diſplay the righteouſneſs of God in pardoning it. This was the appointed covenanted work of MESSIAH, and he alone could perform it. With this view he had ſaid, *Lo, I come* †. And it was in this view, when John ſaw him, that he pointed him out to his diſciples, ſaying, *Behold the Lamb of God!*

Three points offer to our conſideration,

I. The title here given to MESSIAH, *The Lamb of God.*

II. The efficacy of his ſacrifice, *He taketh away ſin.*

III. The extent of it, *The ſin of the world.*

I. He is *the Lamb of God.* The paſchal lamb, and the lambs which were daily offered, morning and evening, according to the law of Moſes, were of God's appointment; but this Lamb was likewiſe of his providing. The others were but types. Though many, they were all inſufficient ‡ to cleanſe the conſciences of the offerers from guilt; and they were all ſuperſeded, when MESSIAH, *by the one offering of himſelf,*

* Gen. i. 3. † Pſal. xl. 7. ‡ Heb. x. 10.

himſelf, once for all, made an end of ſin, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs, in favour of all who believe in his name.

This title, therefore, *The Lamb of God,* refers to his voluntary ſubſtitution for ſinners, that by his ſufferings and death they who deſerved to die might obtain eternal life through him, and for his ſake. Mankind were univerſally chargeable with tranſgreſſion of the law of God, and were in a ſtate of alienation from him. A penalty in caſe of diſobedience was annexed to the law they had broken; to which they, as offenders, were therefore obnoxious. Though it would be preſumptuous in ſuch worms as we are, to determine, upon prineiples of our own, whether the ſovereign Judge of the univerſe could, conſiſtently with his own glory, remit this penalty without ſatisfaction, or not; yet, ſince he has favoured us with a revelation of his will upon the point, we may ſpeak more confidently, and affirm, that it was not conſiſtent with his truth and holineſs, and the honour of his moral government, to do it, becauſe this is his own declaration. We may now be aſſured, that the forgiveneſs of one ſinner, and, indeed, of one ſin, by an act of mere mercy, and without any interpoſing conſideration, was incompatible with the inflexibility of the law, and the truth and juſtice of the Lawgiver. But mercy deſigned the forgiveneſs of innumerable ſinners, each of them chargeable with innumerable ſins; and the declaration, that God is thus merciful, was to be recorded, and publicly known through a long ſucceſſion of ages, and to extend to ſins not yet committed. An act of grace ſo general and unreſerved, might lead men (not to ſpeak of ſuperior intelligences) to diſparaging thoughts of the holineſs of God, and might even encourage them to ſin with hope of impunity, if not connected with ſome proviſion, which might ſhew that the exerciſe of his mercy was in full harmony with

with the honour of all his perfections. How God could *be juſt, and yet juſtify thoſe* * whom his own righteous conſtitution condemned, was a difficulty too great for finite underſtandings to ſolve. But herein is God glorious. His wiſdom propounded, and his love afforded, the adequate, the only poſſible expedient. He revealed to our firſt parents his purpoſe, which in the fulneſs of time he accompliſhed, of ſending *forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem* ſinners from *the curſe of the law* †, by ſuſtaining it for them. Conſidering the dignity of his perſon and the perfection of his obedience, his ſufferings and death for ſins not his own, diſplayed the heinouſneſs of ſin, and the ſevere diſpleaſure of God againſt it, in a much ſtronger light than the execution of the ſentence upon the offenders could poſſibly do. It diſplays likewiſe the juſtice of this ſentence, ſince neither the dignity nor the holineſs of the ſurety could exempt him from ſuffering; and that, though he was the beloved of God, he was not ſpared. This is what I underſtand by atonement and ſatisfaction for ſin.

II. The efficacy of this atonement is complete. *The Lamb of God*, thus ſlain, *taketh away ſin*, both with reſpect to its guilt and its defilement. The Iſraelites, by looking to the brazen ſerpent ‡, were ſaved from death, and healed of their wounds. *The Lamb of God* is an object, propoſed, not to our bodily ſight, but to the eye of the mind, which indeed in fallen man is naturally blind; but the goſpel-meſſage, enlivened by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to open it. *He who* thus *ſeeth the Son, and believeth on him* ‖, is delivered from guilt and condemnation, is juſtified from all ſin. He is warranted to plead the ſufferings of the *Lamb of God* in bar of his own; the whole of the Saviour's obedience unto death, as the ground and title of his

* Rom. iii. 26. † Gal. iv. 4. ‡ Numb. xxi. 9. ‖ John vi. 40.

acceptance unto life. Guilt or obnoxiouſneſs to puniſhment being removed, the ſoul has an open way of acceſs to God, and is prepared to receive bleſſings from him. For as the ſun, the fountain of light, fills the eye that was before blind, the inſtant it receives ſight; ſo God, who is the fountain of goodneſs, enlightens all his intelligent creatures according to their capacity, unleſs they are by ſin blinded, and rendered incapable of communion with him. The Saviour is now received and enthroned in the heart, and from his fulneſs the life of grace is derived and maintained. Thus not only the guilt, but the love of ſin, and its dominion, are taken away, ſubdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned ſinner. The blood, which frees him from diſtreſs, preſerves a remembrance of the great danger and miſery from which he has been delivered warm upon his heart, inſpires him with gratitude to his Deliverer, and furniſhes him with an abiding and conſtraining motive for cheerful and univerſal obedience.

III. The deſigned extent of this gratuitous removal of ſin, by the oblation of *the Lamb of God*, is expreſſed in a large and indefinite manner. *He taketh away the ſin of the world.* Many of my hearers need not be told, what fierce and voluminous diſputes have been maintained concerning the extent of the death of Chriſt. I am afraid the advantages of ſuch controverſies have not been anſwerable to the zeal of the diſputants. For myſelf, I wiſh to be known by no name but that of a Chriſtian, and implicitly to adopt no ſyſtem but the Bible. I uſually endeavour to preach to the heart and the conſcience, and to wave, as much as I can, all controverſial points. But as the ſubject now lies directly before me, I ſhall embrace the occaſion, and ſimply and honeſtly open to you the ſentiments of my heart concerning it.

If becauſe the death of Chriſt is here ſaid to take away

away *the ſin of the world*, or, (as this evangeliſt expreſſes it in another place) the *whole world* *, it be inferred, that he actually deſigned and intended the ſalvation of all men, ſuch an inference would be contradicted by fact. For it is certain that all men will not be ſaved †. It is to be feared, that the greater part of thoſe to whom the word of his ſalvation is ſent periſh in their ſins. If therefore he cannot be diſappointed of his purpoſe, ſince many do periſh, it could not be his fixed deſign, that all men ſhould be finally and abſolutely ſaved.

The exceeding great number, once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, who ſhall be found on his right hand at the great day of his appearance, are frequently ſpoken of in appropriate and peculiar language. They are ſtyled his ſheep ‡, for whom he laid down his life; his elect ‖, his own §; thoſe to whom it is given to believe in his name **; and concerning whom it was *the Father's good pleaſure to predeſtinate them to the adoption of children* ††. By nature, *they are children of wrath, even as others* ‡‡; and no more diſpoſed in themſelves to receive the truth, than thoſe who obſtinately and finally reject it. Whenever they become willing, they are made ſo, *in a day* of divine *power* §§§; and wherein they differ, it is grace *that makes them to differ* §§. Paſſages in the ſcripture to this purpoſe are innumerable; and tho' much ingenuity has been employed to ſoften them, and to make them ſpeak the language of an hypotheſis, they are ſo plain in themſelves, *that he who runs may read.* It is not the language of conjecture, but of inſpiration, that they whom the Lord God *did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son* ***. And though ſome ſerious perſons perplex themſelves

* 1 John ii. 2.
† Matt. vii. 13, 14.
‡ John x. 11, 16.
‖ Mark xiii. 27.
§ John xiii. 1.
** Phil. i. 29.
†† Eph. v. 5.
‡‡ Eph. ii. 3.
§§ 1 Cor. iv. 7.
*** Rom. viii. 29.
§§§ Pſal. cx. 3.

themſelves with needleſs and painful reaſonings, with reſpect to the ſovereignty of God in his conduct towards mankind, they all, if truly ſpiritual and enlightened, ſtand upon this very ground, in their own experience. Many, who ſeem to differ from us in the way of argumentation, perfectly accord with us, when they ſimply ſpeak of what God has done for their ſouls. They know and acknowledge as readily as we, that they were firſt found of him when they ſought him not; and that otherwiſe they neither ſhould nor could have ſought him at all; nor can they give any better reaſon than this why they are ſaved out of the world, *That it pleaſed the Lord to make them his people* *.

But, on the other hand, I cannot think the ſenſe of the expreſſion is ſufficiently explained, by ſaying, That the world, and the whole world, is ſpoken of, to teach us, that the ſacrifice of *the Lamb of God* was not confined, like the Levitical offerings, to the nation of Iſrael only; but that it is available for the ſins of a determinate number of perſons, called the *Elect*, who are ſcattered among many nations, and found under a great variety of ſtates and circumſtances in human life. This is undoubtedly the truth, ſo far as it goes; but not, I apprehend, fully agreeable to the ſcriptural manner of repreſentation. That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet it is not ſaid, *that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave* the elect, but that he came to ſave *ſinners*, to *ſeek and to ſave them that are loſt* †. Upon this ground, I conceive that miniſters have a warrant to preach the goſpel to every human creature, and to addreſs the conſcience of every man in the ſight of God; and that every perſon who hears this goſpel has thereby a warrant, an encouragement, yea, a command, to apply to Jeſus Chriſt for ſalvation; and that they who refuſe, thereby exclude themſelves,

* 1 Sam. xii. 22. † 1 Tim. i. 15. Luke xix. 10.

ſelves, and periſh, not becauſe they never had, nor poſſibly could have any intereſt in his atonement, but ſimply becauſe they will not come unto him that they may have life. I know ſomething of the cavils and curious reaſonings which obtain upon this ſubject, and I know I may be preſſed with difficulties, which I cannot reſolve to the full ſatisfaction of enquiring and ſpeculative ſpirits. I am not diſheartened by meeting with ſome things beyond the graſp of my ſcanty powers, in a book which I believe to be inſpired by him, whoſe ways and thoughts are higher than ours, *as the heavens are higher than the earth* *. But I believe that vain reaſonings, ſelf-will, an attachment to names and parties, and a diſpoſition to draw our ſentiments from human ſyſtems, rather than to form them by a cloſe and humble ſtudy of the Bible, with prayer for divine teaching, are the chief ſources of our perplexities and diſputes.

The extent of the atonement is frequently repreſented, as if a calculation had been made, how much ſuffering was neceſſary for the ſurety to endure, in order exactly to expiate the aggregate number of all the ſins of all the elect; that ſo much he ſuffered preciſely, and no more; and that when this requiſition was completely anſwered, he ſaid, *It is finiſhed, bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt* †. But this nicety of computation does not ſeem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur which overwhelm the attentive mind in the contemplation of the divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, he waters it *abundantly* ‡. He does not reſtrain the rain to cultivated or improveable ſpots, but with a profuſion of bounty worthy of himſelf, his clouds pour down water with equal abundance upon the barren mountain, the lonely deſert, and the pathleſs ocean. Why may we not ſay with the ſcripture, that Chriſt died *to declare*

* Iſ. lv. 8, 9. † John xix. 30. ‡ Pſal. lxv. 10.

clare the righteouſneſs of God *, to manifeſt that he is juſt in juſtifying the ungodly who believe in Jeſus? And for any thing we know to the contrary, the very ſame diſplay of the evil and demerit of ſin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally neceſſary, though the number of the elect were much ſmaller than it will appear to be when they ſhall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the reſidence of one man only; had it been his pleaſure to afford him the ſame *kind* and *degree* of light which we enjoy, the ſame glorious ſun, which is now ſufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been neceſſary for the accommodation of that one perſon. So, perhaps, had it been his pleaſure to ſave but one ſinner in a way that ſhould give the higheſt poſſible diſcovery of his juſtice and of his mercy, this could have been done by no other method than that which he has choſen for the ſalvation of the innumerable multitudes who will in the great day unite in the ſong of praiſe to the Lamb *who loved them, and waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood.* As the ſun has a ſufficiency of light for eyes, (if there were ſo many capable of beholding it), equal in number to the leaves upon the trees, and the blades of graſs that grow upon the earth; ſo in Jeſus, the Sun of Righteouſneſs, *there is plenteous redemption*, he *is rich in mercy to all that call upon him* †; and he invites ſinners, without exception, to whom the word of his ſalvation is ſent, even to the ends of the earth, to *look unto him, that they may be ſaved* ‡.

Under the goſpel-diſpenſation, and by it, God commands *all men, every where, to repent* ‖. All men, therefore, every where, are encouraged to hope for forgiveneſs, according to the conſtitution preſcribed by the goſpel; otherwiſe repentance would be both impracticable and unavailing. And therefore the

* Rom. iii. 25, 26. † Pſal. cxxx. 7. Rom x. 12. ‡ Iſ. xlv. 22.
‖ Acts xvii. 30.

the command to repent implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jeſus, as taking away the ſin of the world. Let it not be ſaid, that to call upon men to believe, which is an act beyond their natural power, is to mock them. There are preſcribed means for the obtaining of faith, which it is not beyond their natural power to comply with, if they are not wilfully obſtinate. We have the word of God for our authority. *God cannot be mocked* *, neither doth he mock his creatures. Our Lord did not mock the young Ruler, when he told him, that if he would ſell his poſſeſſions upon earth, and follow him, *he ſhould have treaſure in heaven* †. Had this Ruler no *power* to ſell his poſſeſſions? I doubt not but that he himſelf thought he had power to ſell them if he pleaſed. But while he loved his money better than he loved Chriſt, and preferred earthly treaſures to heavenly, he had no *will* to part with them. And a want of *will* in a moral agent is *a want of power* in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe. Let none preſume to offer ſuch excuſes to their Maker as they would not accept in their own concerns. If you ſay of a man, he is ſuch a liar that he cannot ſpeak a word of truth; ſo profane that he cannot ſpeak without an oath; ſo diſhoneſt that he cannot omit one opportunity of cheating or ſtealing; do you ſpeak of this diſability to good, as an extenuation, and becauſe you think it renders him free from blame? Surely you think the more he is diſinclined to good, and habituated to evil, the worſe he is. A man that *can* ſpeak lies and perjury, that can deceive and rob, but is ſuch an enemy to truth and goodneſs, that he can do nothing that is kind or upright, muſt be a ſhocking character indeed! Judge not more favourably of yourſelf if you *can* love the world and ſenſual pleaſure, but *cannot* love God; if you *can* fear a worm like yourſelf, but live without the fear of God; if you can boldly trample upon his laws, but *will* not, and therefore *cannot* humble yourſelf

* Gal. vi. 7. † Luke xviii. 22.

felf before him, and ſeek his mercy, in the way of his appointment.

We cannot aſcribe too much to the grace of God; but we ſhould be careful, that under a ſemblance of exalting his grace, we do not furniſh the ſlothful and unfaithful * with excuſes for their wilfulneſs and wickedneſs. God is gracious; but let man be juſtly reſponſible for his own evil, and not preſume to ſtate his caſe ſo, as would, by juſt conſequence, repreſent the holy God as being the cauſe of the ſin, which he hates and forbids.

The whole may be ſummed up in two points, which I commend to your ſerious attention; which it muſt be the buſineſs of my life to enforce; and which, I truſt, I ſhall not repent of having enforced, either at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, when I muſt give an account of my preaching, and you of what you have heard in this place.

1. That ſalvation is, indeed, wholly of grace. The gift of a Saviour, the firſt dawn of light into the heart, all the ſupports and ſupplies needful for carrying on the work from the foundation to the top-ſtone, all is of free grace.

2. That now *the Lamb of God* is preached to you, as taking away the ſin of the world, if you reject him, which may the Lord forbid! I ſay, if you reject him, your blood will be upon your own head. You are warned, you are invited. Dare not to ſay, *Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath reſiſted his will* †? If he will ſave me, I ſhall be ſaved; if not, what can I do? God is merciful, but he is alſo holy and juſt; he is almighty, but his infinite power is combined with wiſdom, and regulated by the great deſigns of his government. He can do innumerable things which he will not do. What he will do (ſo far as we are concerned) his word informs us, *and not one jot or tittle thereof ſhall fail* ‡.

SER-

* Matt. xxv. 26. † Rom. ix. 19. ‡ Matt. v. 18.

SERMON XVII.

Meſſiah deſpiſed and rejected of Men.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.

THE heathen moraliſts, ignorant of the character and perfections of God, the true dignity and immortality of the ſoul, and the root and extent of human depravity, had no better foundation for what they called virtue than pride; no higher aim in their regulations, than the intereſts of ſociety and the conduct of civil life. They expreſſed, indeed, occaſionally, ſome ſentiments of a ſuperior kind; but theſe, however juſt and valuable upon the principles of revelation, were deluſive and impracticable upon their own. And Brutus, one of the moſt admired characters of antiquity, confeſſed, juſt before he put an end to his own life, that having long been enamoured of virtue as a real good, he found it, at laſt, to be but an empty name. But though they had ſo little ſatisfaction, or ſucceſs, in the purſuit of virtue, they were ſo pleaſed with the idea they formed of it, as generally to ſuppoſe, that if virtue could become viſible, it would neceſſarily engage the eſteem and admiration of mankind.

There was, however, one remarkable exception to this opinion. The wiſdom of Socrates ſeems to have been, in many reſpects, different from that of the bulk of their philoſophers. Socrates having expreſſed his idea of a perfect character, a truly virtuous man, ventured to predict the reception ſuch a perſon, if ſuch

ſuch a one could ever be found, would meet with from the world. And he thought, that his practice would be ſo diſſimilar to that of other men, his teſtimony againſt their wickedneſs ſo ſtrong, and his endeavours to reform them ſo importunate and unwelcome, that, inſtead of being univerſally admired, he would be diſliked and hated; that mankind were too degenerate and too obſtinate, to bear either the example or the reproof of ſuch a perſon, and would moſt probably revile and perſecute him, and put him to death as an enemy to their peace.

In this inſtance, the judgment of Socrates accords with the language of the Old, and with the hiſtory of the New Teſtament. MESSIAH was this perfect character. As ſuch Iſaiah deſcribes him. He likewiſe foreſaw how he would be treated, and foretold that he would be *numbered with tranſgreſſors*, deſpiſed and rejected, by the very people who were eye-witneſſes of his upright and benevolent conduct. And thus, in fact, it proved. When Jeſus was upon earth, true virtue and goodneſs were viſibly diſplayed, and thereby the wickedneſs of man became ſignally conſpicuous. For they among whom he was converſant, *preferred a robber and a murderer to him* *. They preſerved Barabbas, who had been juſtly doomed to die for enormous crimes, and they nailed Jeſus, in his ſtead, to the croſs.

When MESSIAH appeared, the Jews profeſſed to blame the wickedneſs of their forefathers, who had oppoſed and ſlain the prophets. If they regretted the ill-treatment the *ſervants* of God had formerly received, might it not be hoped that *they would reverence his Son* †? concerning whom, under this character of MESSIAH, their expectations were raiſed by the ſcriptures, which were read in their ſynagogues every ſabbath-day.

But *he was deſpiſed and rejected of men.* Angels ſung

* John xviii. 40. † Matt. xxi. 37.

ſung praiſes at his birth, *but men deſpiſed him.* He took not upon him the nature of angels, but of man; *yet men rejected him.* Sinful, helpleſs men *rejected and deſpiſed* the only Saviour. *He came to his own, but his own received him not.* How lamentable and fatal was their obſtinacy! Pretended * Meſſiahs were eagerly regarded and followed by them, but the true MESSIAH *was deſpiſed and rejected of men!*

Let us conſider the clauſes of the text ſeparately, in the order in which we read them.

I. *He was deſpiſed and rejected of men.* It would be a great miſtake to imagine that the Jews were the only people capable of this ingratitude and obſtinacy. If any perſon here thinks, ſurely I would not have deſpiſed him, had I ſeen his wonderful works, and heard him ſpeak as never man ſpake: poſſibly that thought may prove you to be of the very ſame ſpirit with thoſe who, while they thirſted for his blood, ignorantly preſumed, that if they had lived in the days of their forefathers, they would not have joined with them in perſecuting the prophets †. The prejudices which operated ſo ſtrongly againſt our Lord's miſſion and miniſtry, were not peculiar to the people of one age or country, but ſuch as are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man. The ſame principles which influenced the Jews to oppoſe and deſpiſe his perſon, ſtill influence multitudes to ſlight and oppoſe the doctrine which he taught, and which he commanded his diſciples to preach and perpetuate to the end of the world. In proof of this, it will be ſufficient to aſſign ſome of the principal cauſes of the contempt and hatred which he met with from the men of that generation.

1. They *deſpiſed him* for what they accounted *the meanneſs of his appearance.* Though rich in himſelf, he became poor for our ſakes, and his poverty made him

* John v. 43. † Matth. xxiii. 31.

him contemptible in their eyes. They expected MESSIAH would appear with external pomp and power. But when they ſaw him, they ſcorned him, ſaying, *Is not this the carpenter's ſon* *? He who had not money to pay the tribute demanded † of him, nor a houſe wherein to lay his head, was of ſmall eſteem with thoſe who were covetous, proud of worldly diſtinctions, and fond of the praiſe and admiration of men.

2. Their contempt was heightened, when this poor man publicly aſſerted his proper *character and claim*, demanded their attention and homage, and ſtyled himſelf in a peculiar ſenſe *the Son of God, the reſurrection and the life* ‡. For this ſeeming inconſiſtence between the appearance he made and the honours he aſſumed, they treated him as a demoniac and a madman ‖. Their language ſtrongly expreſſed their ſentiments of him, when they aſked him with diſdain, *Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Whom makeſt thou thyſelf* §?

3. They objected to him the *low ſtate and former characters of his followers*. Some of them were of low rank in life. The moſt of thoſe who conſtantly attended him were poor fiſhermen. Others had been of bad repute, publicans, and open ſinners. For this they reproached him, and thought they were fully juſtified in their contempt, while they could ſay, *Have any of the rulers or Phariſees believed on him* **?

4. They were farther exaſperated againſt him, by the *authority* and *ſeverity* with which he taught. It is true, he was gentle and meek to all who felt their need of his help, or ſincerely deſired his inſtruction. He received them without exception, and treated them with the greateſt tenderneſs. But he vindicated the honour

* Matth. xiii. 55. † Matth. xvii. 27. ‡ John v. 28. xi. 25.
‖ John x. 20. § John viii. 53. ** John vii. 48.

honour of the law of God, from the corrupt doctrine and tradition of their profeſſed teachers. He expoſed and unmaſked the hypocriſy of their moſt admired characters, and compared the men who were in the higheſt reputation for wiſdom and ſanctity, to whited ſepulchres, warning the people againſt them as blind guides and deceivers.

5. Theſe blind guides ſtrengthened the prejudices of their blind followers againſt him, by miſrepreſentation. They attempted to avail themſelves of the ſcripture, when they thought it would anſwer their purpoſe. They eagerly made the moſt of a prevailing miſtake, that Jeſus was born in Galilee, becauſe he was brought up in Nazareth from his infancy. This they urged as a proof that he could not be MESSIAH, who the prophets had declared was to be born at Bethlehem in Judea. When he healed diſeaſes on the Sabbath-day, they repreſented the effects of his compaſſion as a breach of that ſtrict obſervance of the Sabbath which was enjoined by the law of Moſes, and that therefore he could not be of God *. And when they were not able to deny the reality of his wonderful works, they aſcribed them to the agency of Satan †. We, at this diſtance of time, can eaſily perceive the folly and madneſs of their attempts. But the Scribes and Phariſees were the public authoriſed doctors and teachers of the people, and were ſupported by the eccleſiaſtical and civil power; or, as we ſhould now expreſs it, by church and ſtate. The people were not apt to ſuſpect their leaders, whom they thought wiſer and better than themſelves; or, if ſometimes they heſitated, were impreſſed by the majeſty of his words, or the evidence of his miraculous works, and conſtrained to ſay, *Is not this the ſon of David* ‡? They were ſoon intimidated and ſilenced by canons and laws; for it was carefully enacted, in order to keep them in ſubjection,

* John ix. 16. † Matth. xii. 24. ‡ Matth. xii. 23.

jection, that whoever acknowledged him *ſhould be put out of the ſynagogues* *; that is, according to our modern language, excommunicated. This among the Jews, as it has often ſince been among Chriſtians, was a puniſhment which drew after it terrible conſequences. A man muſt be in good earneſt, or rather taught and ſupported by the grace of God, who could reſiſt ſuch arguments as theſe.

Theſe things are eaſily applicable to the church-hiſtory of ſucceeding times. The goſpel of Chriſt has often been, and is to this day, rejected and deſpiſed upon ſimilar grounds. Its ſimplicity and plainneſs, and the manner of its propoſal, adapted to the uſe and capacity of the vulgar, offend thoſe who are wiſe in their own conceit, and proud of their underſtanding and taſte. At the ſame time they are equally diſguſted by the ſublimity of its doctrines, which will not ſubmit to the teſt of their vain reaſonings, and can only be received by humble faith. The faithfulneſs and freedom which its miniſters are enjoined to uſe, give great offence likewiſe. And becauſe they cannot comply with the humours of thoſe who wiſh them to propheſy ſmooth things and deceits, they are accounted cenſorious, uncharitable, and diſturbers of the public peace. Again, the diſlike and oppoſition it frequently meets with from perſons of great titles and high ſtations, deter multitudes from purſuing thoſe enquiries, which ſome conviction of the truth would prompt them to, were they not diſcouraged by the fear of conſequences. How often has a dread of the diſpleaſure of doctors, biſhops, univerſities, councils, and popes, or an ignorant, ſlaviſh deference to their judgment or deciſions, prevented people from following that light which had begun to force itſelf upon their conſciences? How few among thoſe of reputation for wiſdom and learning, how few of the great and opulent, have encou-

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* John ix. 22. xii. 48.

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raged or eſpouſed the doctrine of the croſs? It is, therefore, more properly a ſubject for lamentation than for wonder, that this way is deſpiſed, *and almoſt every where ſpoken againſt* *. Farther, as the bulk of thoſe who embrace it are of low condition, ſo, many of them are as free to confeſs to the praiſe of the grace of God, as others can be to urge it to their reproach, that till they knew and received this deſpiſed goſpel, their characters and practices were vile. Laſtly, what unhappy ſubtilty has been employed, in a way of reaſon and argument, with an appeal to detached and perverted paſſages of Scripture, to miſrepreſent the work of the Holy Spirit, as folly, hypocriſy, or enthuſiaſm, and even to charge the goſpel itſelf with giving encouragement to a licentious conduct! In ſhort, the ſpirit of the world, the arts and influence of deſigning men, are ſo powerful, that what our Lord ſaid in Judea holds equally true in Chriſtendom, *Bleſſed is he who is not offended in me* †!

I have reſerved to a diſtinct paragraph the mention of one cauſe why the goſpel is frequently deſpiſed and reproached. Becauſe, though it be no leſs unjuſt and unreaſonable than thoſe which I have recited, it is more immediately incumbent upon all who name the name of Chriſt, to prevent it as much as poſſible; I mean, the ſcandal which ariſes from the miſcarriages of thoſe who profeſs it. Offences of this kind muſt come, *but woe to them by whom they come* ‡. There were pretended Chriſtians, even in the apoſtles times, who were *enemies to the croſs of Chriſt* ‖, and by their evil conduct, cauſed the ways of truth to be evil ſpoken of; and, therefore, we cannot be ſurpriſed that there are ſuch perſons now. But *you that love the Lord, hate evil* §. There are many who watch for your halting, and are ready to ſay, There! there!

* Acts xxviii. 22. † Matth. xi. 6. ‡ Matth. xviii. 7.
‖ Phil. iii. 18. § Pſal. xcvii. 10.

ſo we would have it. It will be in vain for miniſters to declare that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godlineſs, unleſs our teſtimony is ſupported by the tempers and conduct of our people: the world will probably judge, rather by what they ſee in you, than by what they hear from us. Nor will it ſuffice that they cannot ſay you are an adulterer, a drunkard, a miſer, or a cheat. If you eſpouſe our doctrine, they will expect you to be humble, meek, patient, and benevolent; to find integrity in all your dealings, and a punctual diſcharge of your duty in every branch of relative life. What muſt the world think of our principles, if they who avow them are fretful, envious, cenſorious, diſcontented, ſlothful, or unfaithful; or if they are niggardly and hard-hearted, or voluptuous and diſſolute, or implacable and revengeful! They who thus *lay ſtumbling-blocks before the blind* *, and confirm the prejudices of the ignorant, will have much to anſwer for.

II It is farther ſaid, He was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.* He was ſurrounded with ſorrows on every ſide, and grief was his intimate, inſeparable companion. Surely this conſideration, if any, will animate us *to endure the croſs, and to deſpiſe the ſhame* we may be expoſed to for his ſake. The illuſtration of this ſubject will offer more fully in the ſequel. It ſhall ſuffice, at preſent, to aſſign three cauſes for his continual ſorrows.

1. The *outward courſe of life,* to which he ſubmitted, for the ſake of ſinners, expoſed him to want, wearineſs, contempt, and oppoſition. And though his reſignation and patience were perfect, yet he was truly a man, and partaker of our nature, with all its affections and ſenſibilities which do not imply ſin. His feelings, therefore, were human, ſimilar to our own in ſimilar circumſtances, and they were often painfully exerciſed. Once and again we read that he was hungry and had no food; he was thirſty

* Lev. xix. 14.

ſty *, and was nearly refuſed a little water to drink, when wearied with his journeying in the heat of the day. His character was aſperſed, his perſon deſpiſed, his words inſidiouſly wreſted, his actions miſrepreſented. He was miſunderſtood even by his friends, betrayed by one diſciple, denied by another, and forſaken by the reſt †. It is hardly poſſible for his followers to meet with any outward trial, which may not remind them of ſome part of the hiſtory of their Lord and Maſter, *who left them an example of ſuffering, that they ſhould* cheerfully *follow his ſteps* ‡.

2. His *perfect knowledge* and *foreſight* of thoſe ſufferings which we emphatically call *His Paſſion.* How often does he ſpeak of them, and deſcribe the circumſtances as if they were actually preſent? Futurity is, in mercy, concealed from us. It would often bereave us of all preſent comfort, if we knew what the next year, or, perhaps, what the next day would bring forth. If ſome of you could have foreſeen, many years ago, what you have ſince been brought through, you would probably have ſunk under the apprehenſion; or the ſtouteſt of us might ſink now, if we were certainly to know what may be yet before us. But Jeſus, long before he made atonement for our ſins, had counted the coſt. And tho' his love determined him to ſave us, the proſpect, which was continually preſent to his view, of the approaching unutterable agonies of his ſoul, of all that he muſt endure from God, from the powers of darkneſs, and from wicked men, when he ſhould *be made a curſe for us, to redeem us from the curſe of the law* ‖; I ſay, this tremendous proſpect was, doubtleſs, a perp tual ſource of ſorrow.

3. *The frame of his Spirit.* Whoever has a meaſure of the mind that was in Chriſt, muſt be proportionally burdened and grieved, like righteous Lot in Sodom §,

* Matth. iv. 9. xxi. 18. John iv. 2. † John vii. 5. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21.
‖ Gal. iii. 13. § 2 Pet. ii. 8.

with the wickedneſs around him, if he lives in ſociety. Who that has any regard for the honour of God, or the ſouls of men, can hear and ſee what paſſes every hour; how the authority of God is affronted, his goodneſs abuſed, and his mercy deſpiſed, without emotions of grief and compaſſion? If we are ſpiritually-minded, we muſt be thus affected; and we ſhould be more ſo, if we were more ſpiritual. But the holineſs of MESSIAH, and, conſequently, his hatred of ſin, was abſolutely perfect. His view of the guilt and miſery of ſinners, was likewiſe comprehenſive and clear. How muſt he be therefore grieved by the wickedneſs and inſenſibility of thoſe with whom he daily converſed! eſpecially as he not only obſerved the outward conduct of men, but had an intimate knowledge of the evil heart, which is hidden from us. In this ſenſe his ſufferings and ſorrows began with his early years, and continued throughout the whole of his life. He undoubtedly could ſay, with an emphaſis peculiar to himſelf, *I beheld the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved; rivers of waters run down my eyes, becauſe men keep not thy law* *.

We call ourſelves the followers and ſervants of him, who was deſpiſed of men, and encompaſſed with ſorrows. And ſhall we then *ſeek great things for ourſelves* †, as if we belonged to the preſent world, and expected no portion beyond it? Or ſhall we be tremblingly alive to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, and think it a great hardſhip, if it be our lot to ſuffer ſhame for his ſake, who endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame for us? Rather may we account ſuch diſgrace our glory, and every loſs and ſuffering, that we may endure for him, a gain; while on the other hand we learn, with the Apoſtle Paul, to eſteem every gain and honour this world can afford, *to be but loſs and dung in compariſon of the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord* ‡.

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* Pſal. cxix. 156, 158. † Jer. xlv. 5. ‡ Phil. iii. 8.

SERMON XVIII.

Voluntary Suffering.

ISAIAH l. 6.

I gave my back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from ſhame and ſpitting.

THAT which often paſſes amongſt men for reſolution, and the proof of a noble, courageous ſpirit, is, in reality, the effect and mark of a weak and little mind. At leaſt, it is chiefly owing to the preſence of certain circumſtances, which have a greater influence upon the conduct than any inherent principle. Thus, may perſons who appear to ſet death and danger at defiance in the hour of battle, while they are animated by the examples of thoſe around them, and inſtigated by a fear of the puniſhment or ſhame they would incur if they deſerted their poſt; upon a change of ſituation, as, for inſtance, on a bed of ſickneſs, diſcover no traces of the heroiſm for which they were before applauded, but tremble at the leiſurely approach of death, though they were thought to deſpiſe it under a different form. It was not true fortitude, it was rather a contemptible puſillanimity, that determined the celebrated Cato to deſtroy himſelf. He was afraid of Cæſar; his dread of him, after his victories, was ſo great, that he durſt not look him in the face; and therefore he killed himſelf to avoid him. To the ſame meanneſs of ſentiment we may confidently aſcribe the pretended gallantry of modern duelliſts. They fight, not becauſe they are not afraid of death, but becauſe they are impelled by another fear, which makes

a greater impreſſion upon a feeble, irreſolute mind. They live upon the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and feel themſelves too weak to bear the contempt they ſhould meet with from the circle of their acquaintance, if they ſhould decline acting upon the falſe principles of honour which pride and folly have eſtabliſhed. They have not reſolution ſufficient to act the part which conſcience and reaſon would dictate, and therefore hazard life, and every thing that is dear to them as men, rather than dare to withſtand the prevalence of an abſurd and brutal cuſtom.

A patient enduring of affliction, and eſpecially of diſgrace and contempt, to which the characters the world moſt admire are confeſſedly unequal, is a much ſurer proof of true fortitude, than any of thoſe actions which the love of praiſe, the fear of man, or even a mercenary attachment to lucre, are capable of producing. True *magnanimity* is evidenced by the real importance of the end it propoſes, and by the ſteadineſs with which it purſues the proper means of attaining that end; undiſturbed and unwearied by difficulty, danger, or pain, and equally indifferent to the cenſure or ſcorn of incompetent judges. This greatneſs of mind is eſſential and peculiar to the character of the Chriſtian, I mean the Chriſtian who deſerves the name. His ends are great and ſublime, to glorify God, to obtain nearer communion with him, and to advance in conformity to his holy will. To attain theſe ends, he employs the means preſcribed by the Lord, he waits at Wiſdom's gates *, and walks in the paths of dependence and obedience. He therefore cannot conform to the prevailing maxims and purſuits of the many, and is liable to be hated and ſcorned for his ſingularity. But he neither courts the ſmiles of men, nor ſhrinks at the thought of their diſpleaſure. He loves his fellow-creatures, and is ready to do them every

* Prov. viii. 34.

every kind office in his power; but he cannot fear them, becauſe he fears the Lord God.

But this life the Chriſtian lives *by faith in the Son of God* *. Jeſus is the ſource of his wiſdom and ſtrength. He likewiſe is his exemplar. He is crucified to the world by the croſs of Chriſt; and a principal reaſon of his indifference to the opinion of the world, is the conſideration of the manner in which his Lord was treated by it. He is the follower of him who ſaid, *I gave my back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from ſhame and ſpitting.*

We may obſerve, from the words, that the humiliation of MESSIAH was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. With reſpect to his engagement, as the Mediator between God and ſinners, a great work was given him to do, and he became reſponſible; and therefore, in this ſenſe, bound, and under obligation. But his compliance was likewiſe *voluntary*; for he gave himſelf up freely to ſuffer, the juſt for the unjuſt. Could he have relinquiſhed our cauſe, and left us to the deſerved conſequence of our ſins, in the trying hour when his enemies ſeized upon him, legions of angels †, had they been wanted, would have appeared for his reſcue. But if he was determined to ſave others, then his own ſufferings were unavoidable. Men, in the proſecution of their deſigns, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way, which, though they encounter with ſome cheerfulneſs, in hope of ſurmounting them, and carrying their point at laſt, are conſidered as impediments; but the ſufferings of MESSIAH were eſſentially neceſſary to the accompliſhment of his great deſigns, preciſely determined, and preſent to his view before-hand, ſo that (as I lately obſerved) there was not a ſingle circumſtance that happened to him unawares. He knew

* Gal. ii. 20. † Matt. xxvi. 53.

that no blood but his own could make atonement for ſin, that nothing leſs than his humiliation could expiate our pride; that if he did not *thus* ſuffer, ſinners muſt inevitably periſh; and therefore (ſuch was his love!) he cheerfully and voluntarily *gave his back to the ſmiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.* Two deſigns of vaſt importance filled his mind; the completion of them was that joy ſet before him, for the ſake of which, *he made himſelf of no reputation, endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame.* Theſe were, the glory of God, and the ſalvation of ſinners.

1. The higheſt end of his mediation was to diſplay the glory of the divine character in the ſtrongeſt light, to afford to all intelligent creatures *, the brighteſt manifeſtation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wiſdom of God, his holineſs, juſtice, truth, and love, the ſtability and excellence of his moral government, all mutually illuſtrating each other, as combined and ſhining forth in *his* perſon, and in his mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be ſeen, by an enlightened eye, in creation, much in his providential rule and care over his creatures; but the *brightneſs* of his glory †, the expreſs and full diſcovery of his perfections, can only be known by Jeſus Chriſt, and the revelation which God has given of himſelf to the world by him. And, accordingly, we are aſſured, that the angels, whoſe knowledge of the natural world is doubtleſs vaſtly ſuperior to ours, deſire to look into theſe things; and that the manifold wiſdom of God is ſupereminently made known to principalities and powers, in heaven, by the diſpenſation of his grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great deſign, cloſely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the complete

* Eph. iii. 10. † John i. 18. Heb. i. 3.

complete and everlaſting ſalvation of that multitude of miſerable ſinners, who, according to the purpoſe of God, and by the working of his mighty power, ſhall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, ſhall put their truſt in him, upon the warrant of the promiſe and command of God, and yield themſelves to be his willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the preſent life, but they ſhall be delivered out of them all; they ſhall overcome, they ſhall be more than conquerors, *by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his teſtimony* *; and then they ſhall ſhine, like the ſun, in the kingdom of heaven. The conſummation of their happineſs, is a branch of the joy which was ſet before him. For their ſakes, that they might be happy, that he may be admired in them, and by them, to the glory of God, who is all in all, he voluntarily ſubſtituted himſelf to ſufferings and death. He endured the croſs, and he deſpiſed the ſhame. *He gave his back to the ſmiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, he hid not his face from ſhame and ſpitting.*

II. But are we reading a prophecy, or the hiſtory of his extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from his hiſtory by the evangeliſts. With what cruelty, with what contempt was he treated, firſt by the ſervants in the hall of the High Prieſt, afterwards by the Roman ſoldiers! Let us conſider him, *who endured the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf* †. Theſe words of the apoſtle ſuggeſt ſome preliminary obſervations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impreſſion from the ſeveral particulars here mentioned.

When the apoſtle would diſpoſe believers by an argument or motive (which, if we fully underſtood it, would render all other arguments unneceſſary) to endure ſufferings and croſſes patiently, he ſays, *Conſider him*—he uſes a word which is properly a mathematical

* Rev. xii. 11. † Heb. xii. 3.

thematical term, denoting the ratio or proportion between different numbers, or figures, q. d. Compare yourſelves with him, and his ſufferings with your own. Conſider who he is, no leſs than what he endured.

In the apprehenſions of men, inſults are aggravated in proportion to the diſparity between the perſon who receives, and who offers them. A blow from an equal is an offence, but would be ſtill more deeply reſented from an inferior. But if a ſubject, a ſervant, a ſlave, ſhould preſume to ſtrike a king, it would juſtly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jeſus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worſhip, made himſelf ſo entirely of no reputation, that the baſeſt of the people, the ſervants, the common ſoldiers, were not afraid to make him the object of their deriſion, and to expreſs their hatred in the moſt ſarcaſtic and contemptuous manner. It is ſaid, that he endured the contradiction of *ſinners*. So, perhaps, do we; but we are ſinners likewiſe, and deſerve much more than we ſuffer, if not immediately from the inſtruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what inſtruments he pleaſes to afflict us for our ſins. This thought quieted the ſpirit of David, when his own ſon roſe up againſt his life, and his own ſervant curſed him to his face *. But Jeſus was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled, he had done nothing amiſs; yet the uſage he met with was ſuch as has ſeldom been offered to the vileſt malefactor. Their cruel and ſcornful contradiction was likewiſe expreſsly and directly againſt *himſelf*; whereas his people only ſuffer from unreaſonable and wicked men, for his ſake, and for their profeſſed attachment to *him*. In the moſt violent perſecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce his name and his cauſe uſually eſcaped puniſhment, and were frequently

* 2 Sam. xvi. 11.

frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is ſtill the ground of the world's diſpleaſure; fierce and bitter as their oppoſition may ſeem, the way to reconciliation is always open; they are not angry with us farther than we avow a dependence upon him, and ſhew ourſelves determined to obey him rather than men. If we could forſake him, their reſentment would be diſarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from his ſervice. I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon theſe terms, are eſteemed by them for their compliance, but they are ſeldom diſturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we ſuffer as Chriſtians, it is for his ſake. He likewiſe ſuffered for our ſakes; but how wide is the difference between him and us? We, when the trial is ſharp, are in danger of flinching from the cauſe of our beſt friend and benefactor, to whom our obligations are ſo innumerable, and ſo immenſe; whereas he gave himſelf up to endure ſuch things for us, when we were ſtrangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmoſt deteſtation and ſcorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unreſtrained barbarity could ſuggeſt.

1. They began to *ſpit upon him* in the High Prieſt's hall. The Roman ſoldiers likewiſe *did ſpit upon him*, when they had contemptuouſly arrayed him in a ſcarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him, in mockery of his title of King. Great as an inſult of this kind would be deemed amongſt us, it was conſidered as ſtill greater, according to the cuſtoms prevalent in the eaſtern countries. There, to ſpit, even in the preſence of a perſon, though it were only upon the ground, conveyed the idea of diſdain and abhorrence. But the loweſt of the people ſpit *in the face* of the Son of God. No compariſon can fully illuſtrate this indignity. There is ſome proportion between the greateſt earthly Monarch and

the moſt abject ſlave. They did not ſpit upon Alexander, or Cæſar, but upon the Lord of glory.

2. They *buffeted and beat him on the face*, and when he meekly offered his cheeks to their blows, *they plucked off the hair*. The beard was in thoſe times accounted honourable; and when David's ſervants were ſhaven by the command of Hanun *, they were aſhamed to be ſeen. But Jeſus was not ſhaven. With ſavage violence they tore off the hair of his beard; while he, like a ſheep before the ſhearers, was dumb, and quietly yielded himſelf to their outrages.

3. *His back* they *tore with ſcourges*, as was foretold by the Pſalmiſt †. *The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows.* The Jewiſh council condemned him to death for blaſphemy, becauſe he ſaid he was the Son of God. Stoning was the puniſhment preſcribed, by the law of Moſes, in ſuch caſes ‡. But this death was not ſufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut their inſatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their ſubjection to the Roman power to be ſo abſolute, that it was not lawful for them to put any one to death ‖ according to their own judicial law; and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the puniſhment which the Romans appropriated to ſlaves who were guilty of flagitious crimes, and therefore inſiſted that he ſhould be crucified. According to the Roman cuſtom, thoſe who were crucified were previouſly ſcourged. Thus, when they had mocked him, and made him their ſport, by putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a ſceptre, in deriſion of his kingly office, he was ſtripped and ſcourged. It was not unfrequent for the ſufferers to expire under the ſeverity and torture of ſcourging. And we may be certain

* 2 Sam. x. 5. † Pſal. cxix. 3. ‡ Lev. xxiv. 16. ‖ John xviii. 31.

certain that Jeſus experienced no lenity from their mercileſs hands. The plowers plowed his back. But more and greater tortures were before him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for ſin by his ſufferings; and as he had power over his own life, he would not diſmiſs his ſpirit, till he could ſay, *It is finiſhed.*

And now, to uſe the words of Pilate, *Behold the man* *! Oh! for a realizing impreſſion of this his extreme humiliation and ſuffering, that we may be duly affected with a ſenſe of his love to ſinners, and of the evil of our ſins, which rendered it neceſſary that the ſurety ſhould thus ſuffer! Behold *the Lamb of God*, mocked, blind-folded, ſpit upon, and ſcourged! Let us add to all this the conſideration of his praying for his tormentors †, and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall *we* then refuſe to ſuffer ſhame for *his* ſake, and be intimidated by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our attachment to him! Ah! Lord, we are, indeed, capable of this baſeneſs and ingratitude. But if thou art pleaſed to ſtrengthen us with the power of thy Spirit, we will account ſuch diſgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and deſpond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us, and perſecute us, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt us, provided it be falſely ‡, and provided it be for thy ſake!

Shall we continue in ſin ‖, after we know what it coſt him to expiate our ſins! God forbid! When Mark Antony addreſſed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæſar—he enlarged upon Cæſar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it, in the donations and bequeſts he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he ſpecified. When he had thus engaged their

* John xix. 5. † Luke xxiii. 34. ‡ Matt. v. 11. ‖ Rom. vi. 1.

their admiration and gratitude, and they diſcovered emotions of regret and ſenſibility, that Cæſar, the greateſt character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for *them*, and had remembered *them* in his will, ſhould be ſlain, Antony threw aſide a cloth, and ſhewed them his dead body covered with wounds and blood. This ſight rendered it needleſs to ſay more. The whole aſſembly united as one man, to ſearch out, and to deſtroy his murderers. The application is obvious.—May our hearts, from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable reſentment againſt ſin, the procuring cauſe of the humiliation and death of our beſt friend and benefactor!

SER-

SERMON XIX.

Meſſiah Suffering and Wounded for us.

ISAIAH liii. 4, 5.

Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our ſorrows.—He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed.

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, Moſes and Elijah appeared in glory and converſed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we ſhould probably have deſired to know the ſubject of their converſation, as we might reaſonably ſuppoſe it turned upon very intereſting and important topics. The ſcripture makes little proviſion for the indulgence of our curioſity, but omits nothing that is neceſſary for our inſtruction; and we learn thus much from it, that they diſcourſed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, ſuch as the riſe and fall of empires; but they ſpake of the ſufferings of Jeſus, and of the deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem. They ſpake of his Exodus *, (as the word is) his departure out of life, the iſſue and completion of his engagement for ſinners, that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born ſouls. We lately conſidered the cruel inſults MESSIAH ſubmitted to, from the ſervants in the High Prieſt's hall, and from the Roman ſoldiers. The paſſage I have now read leads our meditations to

* Luke ix. 31.

to the foot of the croſs. May the Holy Spirit realize the ſcene to our hearts! The croſs of Chriſt diſplays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a juſt God and a Saviour. Here the believer contemplates in one view, the unſpeakable evil of ſin, and the unſearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the moſt affecting ſenſe of the miſery which he has deſerved, while at the ſame time he receives the fulleſt aſſurance that there is forgiveneſs with God, and diſcovers a ſure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of diſappointment. From the moment the Apoſtle Paul was enlightened to underſtand this myſtery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but loſs; his former ſuppoſed wiſdom no better than folly; and became determined to know nothing *, to depend upon nothing, to glory in nothing, but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.

A repreſentation of the Redeemer's ſufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the paſſions, may be made by the powers of oratory; and ſimilar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the ſubject is known beforehand to be entirely a fiction. But light in the underſtanding is neceſſary to convince and influence the heart. Unleſs the mind be deeply penetrated with the *cauſes* which rendered MESSIAH's death neceſſary, the moſt pathetic deſcription of the *fact* will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can aſſign theſe cauſes. You have felt yourſelves perſonally concerned in an event which took place long before your birth; and if you are aſked, Why was Jeſus mocked, buffeted, and ſpit upon? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the croſs? You can anſwer, *Surely he hath borne*

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14.

borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows—and you can likewiſe ſay, *By his ſtripes we are healed.*

The words lead us to conſider the *cauſe* and the *effect.*

I. The *cauſe* of the Redeemer's ſufferings, implied in the word *our.* He bore the griefs and ſorrows which were our deſert. Such is the language, the confeſſion, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the ſpirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death, and likewiſe they who ſee they muſt periſh unleſs ſaved by him, are authoriſed to conſider him as mindful of them, and making proviſion for them in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brazen ſerpent, according to God's appointment, had a ſufficient proof in themſelves, that it was erected and placed in view of the camp*, on their account. *He bore our griefs.*—It does not follow that ſinners muſt have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible puniſhment, it may teach us, that without his interpoſition we were juſtly liable to extremity of miſery in the preſent life. That we who have offended God ſhould enjoy health, peace, or ſatisfaction for a ſingle hour; that we do not draw every breath in the moſt excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourſelves, and mutually to each other; that our ſtate while upon earth, is, in any reſpect, better than an image of hell,—muſt wholly be aſcribed to him. A ſinner, as ſuch, is under the curſe of the law; and this curſe includes every ſpecies of miſery that can affect us, either in mind, body, or eſtate. But *he* was appointed, from the beginning, to ſuſtain and exhauſt the curſe for us. And therefore the earth, though

* Num. xxi. 9.

though ſo long inhabited by wretches in a ſtate of bold rebellion againſt their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-ſuffering patience and mercy. Therefore he ſtill affords *us rain and fruitful ſeaſons* *, indulges us with a variety of temporal bleſſings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This conſideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love and pledges of his favour, ſanctified to their uſe by his blood and promiſe. Cheered by ſuch thoughts as theſe, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleaſure, of which the expenſive and diſſipated ſenſualiſt has no conception. And how does it add to the reliſh of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are uſing them,

There's not a gift his hand beſtows,
But coſt his heart a groan!

So, likewiſe, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the preſſure of all their ſufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, *yea glory in tribulation* † *alſo.*

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his ſufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a juſt idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, conſidered in themſelves, they were light, if compared with the agonies of his ſoul. Theſe extorted the blood from his body ‡, before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his moſt dolorous cry upon the croſs, it was not for the anguiſh of his bodily wounds, but his ſoul felt for a ſeaſon a ſeparation from the preſence and comforts of God. Therefore he ſaid, *Why haſt thou forſaken me* ‖*?* It is true his holy nature was not capable of ſome part of the impenitent ſinner's portion. Remorſe of conſcience, the ſtings of the never-dying worm, and the

* Acts xiv. 17. † Rom. v. 3. ‡ Luke xxiii. 44. ‖ Matt. xxvii. 46.

the horrors and rage of deſpair, could not touch him, who had no perſonal ſin, and whoſe love and faith were always perfect: But a ſword pierced his ſoul: and it pleaſed the Father not only to permit him to be bruiſed by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruiſe him himſelf *.

The ground of all this was laid in his voluntary ſubſtitution of himſelf from before the foundation of the world, to obey and ſuffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the paſſage we are next to conſider. At preſent let us briefly notice the expreſſions before us.

1. *He was wounded.* This word, which ſignifies *pierced* or *ſtabbed*, refers to his crucifixion. This puniſhment being unknown to the Jews till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no expreſs name for, in their language. Yet it is plainly deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, who, ſpeaking, by the ſpirit of prophecy, in the perſon of MESSIAH, ſays, *They pierced my hands and my feet* †. And it was typified under the law of Moſes ‡, by the curſe annexed to hanging upon a tree, which was the neareſt death to this; by the paſchal lamb, which was roaſted; and by the braſen ſerpent. It was a fit death for a ſinner, painful and ignominious. How circumſtantial were the prophecies, how appoſite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews ſhould be led to depart from their own cuſtoms and purpoſes, in order to their accompliſhment, though they intended nothing leſs! But it was the determined counſel and appointment of God ‖, who over-rules all the deſigns of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purpoſes of his own will and glory.

2. *He was bruiſed.* If we diſtinguiſh wounded from bruiſed, the latter may be referred to the ſor-

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* If. liii 10 † Pſal. xxii. 16.
‡ Deut. xxi. 23. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Cor. v. 7. John iii. 14. ‖ Acts ii. 23.

rows of his ſoul, (for it is expreſsly ſaid, *It pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him*); that diſtreſs broke his heart, filled him with diſmay, cauſed him to be ſore amazed and very heavy, and to ſay to his diſciples, *My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death* *. No words can be more ſelected and emphatical, than thoſe which the evangeliſts uſe in deſcribing his conſternation in the garden of Gethſemane. How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for by thoſe who deny that his ſufferings and death were a proper atonement of ſin; and who ſuppoſe, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he died, merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulneſs under ſufferings! Many of his followers, who were thus witneſſes for the truth, and patterns of faithfulneſs to us, have met death in its moſt terrible forms with compoſure, yea, with pleaſure, yea, with tranſports of joy. But is the diſciple above his Lord? If Chriſtians have triumphed in ſuch circumſtances, why did Chriſt tremble? Not ſurely becauſe their courage and conſtancy were greater than his. The cauſes were entirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body; but Jeſus ſuffered immediately from the hand of God. One ſtroke of his mighty hand can bruiſe the ſpirit of man more ſenſibly than the united power of all creatures. Jeſus died. They that believe in him, are ſaid *to ſleep in him* †. To them death comes diſarmed of its ſting, wearing a friendly aſpect, and bringing a welcome meſſage of diſmiſſion from every evil. But the death of Jeſus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which ſinners had deſerved to ſuffer as tranſgreſſors of the law.

3. The *chaſtiſement* or the *puniſhment* of our *peace was upon him*, that chaſtiſement or puniſhment on the account of which ſinners obtain peace with God. It

* Matt. xxvi. 38. † 1 Theſſ. iv. 14.

It properly ſignifies here, a puniſhment for inſtruction or example. Puniſhments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others. The two former reaſons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil, he was perfect before, and in ſuffering. But ſtanding in the place of ſinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the miſery and diſtreſs which ſin demerited. Thus juſtice was vindicated in the exerciſe of mercy, and ſinners believing in his name are exempted from puniſhment, for his ſake, in a way which affords not the leaſt encouragement or extenuation to ſin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his ſufferings for ſins not his own. *He bore our griefs, and carried our ſorrows*; he was wounded and bruiſed for us, *the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him*, that *by his ſtripes we may be healed*. The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word the Apoſtle Peter uſes in his quotation of this paſſage, which we render *ſtripes* *, is properly the mark which ſtripes or wounds leave upon the body, or, as we ſay, *ſcars*. The ſcars in his hands, feet, and ſide, and perhaps other marks of his many wounds, remained after his reſurrection. And John ſaw him in viſion, before the throne, as a lamb that had been ſlain. All theſe expreſſions and repreſentations, I apprehend, are deſigned to intimate to us, that though the death of MESSIAH is an event long ſince paſt, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and to the eye of faith are ever preſent. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, ſhould be healed, by beholding the wounds of another! Yet this is the language of the goſpel, Look and live. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved.* Three great wounds are ours, guilt, ſin, and ſorrow; but by contemplating his weals or ſcars with an enlightened

* 1 Pet. iii. 24.

lightened eye, and by rightly underſtanding, who was thus wounded, and why, all theſe wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine ſpeak well of it. Tell to others, as you have an opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is uſual for thoſe who have been relieved, in dangerous and complicated diſeaſes, by a ſkilful phyſician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often ſee public acknowledgments to this purpoſe. If all the perſons who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publiſh their caſes, how greatly would his power and grace be diſplayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occaſionally publiſhed, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumſtances equally ſtriking, yet there is a ſufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excuſe. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind, (though many might be mentioned which are indiſputably true, and ſuperior to the cavils of gainſayers), the Confeſſions of Auſtin may be appealed to, as a proof that the goſpel is not a ſyſtem of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind, to ſubdue the obſtinate will, to weaken the force of long-confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from diſtreſſing fears, and to effect a real, univerſal, permanent, and beneficial change of ſentiment and conduct, ſuch as no ſimilar inſtance can be found, in the hiſtory of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true Chriſtian, in the circle of your connections you will ſometimes have a fair opportunity of giving a reaſon of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and wiſdom to improve ſuch ſeaſons; and if you ſpeak the truth in ſimplicity and

love,

love, you know not but the Lord may give his bleſſing to your teſtimony, and honour you as an inſtrument of good. And to convert one ſinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet remember, if you eſpouſe this cauſe, a certain conſiſtency of character will be expected from you, without which you had better be ſilent, than ſpeak in its defence, or profeſs yourſelf a ſharer in the privileges of the goſpel. There are too many perſons who treat the great truths we profeſs as mere opinions, points of ſpeculation, which form the ſhibboleth of a party: There are others, who think an attachment to them the ſure ſign of an enthuſiaſtic deluded imagination: And there are others, again, who miſrepreſent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloke and an encouragement to licentiouſneſs. Beware, leſt, by an improper conduct, you lay ſtumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, ſtrengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-ſighted to the faults of religious profeſſors; and though they affect to deſpiſe their principles, they are tolerable judges what that converſation is which only theſe principles can produce, and always expect it from thoſe who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the miniſters who preach it, are not accompanied with a ſpirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are paſſionate, peeviſh, diſcontented, cenſorious, or proud; if they obſerve that you are greedy of gain, penurious, cloſe-fiſted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their cuſtoms and ſpirit, mingle with them in their amuſements, and do not maintain a noble ſingularity by avoiding

avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only deſpiſe *you* in their hearts, but they will take the occaſion of deſpiſing and ſpeaking evil of the truth itſelf on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly ſolicitous to adorn your profeſſion, by walking agreeable to the rules of the goſpel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus *well-doing, you will put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men* *, and in a great meaſure ſtop their mouths, if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be conſtrained to feel a ſecret reverence for you in their conſciences.

But are there any hearts of ſtone amongſt us, who are ſtill unaffected by the love and ſufferings of the Son of God; who are ſtill crucifying him afreſh, and living in ſin, though they hear and know what it coſt him to make an atonement for ſin? Yet now hear —now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I addreſs you once more. I once more conjure you, by his agony and bloody ſweat, by his paſſion, croſs, and death, to ſeek to him that your ſouls may live. Can you be proof againſt theſe arguments? Nay, then, ſhould you live and die thus obſtinate, you muſt periſh indeed!

* 1 Pet. ii. 15.

SER-

SERMON XX.

Sin charged upon the Surety.

ISAIAH liii. 6.

All we like ſheep have gone aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

COMPARISONS, in the ſcripture, are frequently to be underſtood with great limitation: perhaps, out of many circumſtances, one only is juſtly applicable to the caſe. Thus, when our Lord ſays, *Behold I come as a thief* *—common ſenſe will fix the reſemblance to a ſingle point, that he will come ſuddenly, and unexpected. So when wandering ſinners are compared to wandering ſheep, we have a ſtriking image of the danger of their ſtate, and of their inability to recover themſelves. Sheep wandering without a ſhepherd, are expoſed, a defenceleſs and eaſy prey, to wild beaſts and enemies, and liable to periſh for want of paſture; for they are not able either to provide for themſelves, or to find the way back to the place from whence they ſtrayed. Whatever they ſuffer, they continue to wander, and if not ſought out, will be loſt. Thus far the alluſion holds. But ſheep in ſuch a ſituation are not the ſubjects of blame. They would be highly blameable, if we could ſuppoſe them rational creatures; if they had been under the eye of a careful and provident ſhepherd, had been capable of knowing him, had wilfully and obſtinately renounced his protection and guidance, and voluntarily choſen to plunge themſelves into danger, rather

* REV. xvi. 15.

than to remain with him any longer. Thus it is with man. His wandering is rebellious. God made him *upright*, but he has *ſought out* to himſelf *many inventions* *. God has appointed for mankind a ſafe and pleaſant path, by walking in which, they ſhall find reſt to their ſouls; but they ſay, *We will not walk therein* †. They were capable of knowing the conſequences of going aſtray, were repeatedly warned of them, were fenced in by wiſe and good laws, which they preſumptuouſly broke through. And when they had wandered from him, they were again and again invited to return to him, but they refuſed. They mocked his meſſages and his meſſengers, and preferred the miſery they had brought upon themſelves, to the happineſs of being under his direction and care. Surely he emphatically deſerves the name of the Good Shepherd, who freely laid down his life to reſtore ſheep of this character!

My text therefore expreſſes the ſentiment of thoſe, and of thoſe only, who are acquainted with the miſery of our fallen ſtate, feel their own concern in it, and approve of the method which God has provided for their deliverance and recovery. It contains a confeſſion of their own guilt, and an acknowledgement of his mercy.

I. *A confeſſion of guilt and wretchedneſs.* Sin has deprived us both of the knowledge and preſence of God. In conſequence of this, we wander, every one to his own way. All are under the power of ſin, and all equally ſtrangers to the paths of peace and ſafety. The paths which ſinners chuſe for themſelves are diverſe from each other, as inclination or circumſtances vary; but however different in appearance, if perſiſted in, they terminate at laſt in the ſame point. They all lead to deſtruction. We may obſerve on this head,

1. It is a ſufficient proof of our depravity, that we prefer

* Eccl. vii. 29. † Jer. vi. 16.

prefer our own ways to the Lord's; nor can he inflict a heavier judgment upon us in this life, than to give us up entirely to the way of our own hearts. He made us to be happy; but as he made us for himſelf, and gave us a capacity, and a vaſtneſs of deſire, which only he himſelf can ſatisfy, the very conſtitution and frame of our nature render happineſs impoſſible to us, unleſs in a way of dependence upon him, and obedience to his laws. The lamb that grazes in the meadow, and the fiſh that ſwims in the ſtream, are each in their proper element. If you ſuppoſe them to change places, they muſt both periſh. But the brute-creation have no propenſity to ſuch changes as would deſtroy them. The inſtincts implanted in them by their great Creator are conducive to their welfare; and to theſe inſtincts they are uniformly faithful. If you can conceive of beaſts impatient to leave the ſhore, and improve their ſituation by ruſhing into the ocean; and the fiſhes equally earneſt to forſake the waters, in queſt of new and greater advantages upon the dry land; it may illuſtrate the folly of fallen man, who turned aſide by a deceived heart, refuſes life, and ſeeks death in the error of his ways. For the will of God (if I may ſo ſpeak) is our proper element; and if we depart from it, our ſin unavoidably involves our puniſhment. We naturally indulge hard thoughts of God, and think the rule he has enjoined us too ſtrict and ſevere, intended to reſtrain us from real good, and propoſe to ourſelves ſome unknown advantages by tranſgreſſing it. Thus Satan perſuaded Eve, and we derive from her: and though we know that ſhe only gained miſery by the experiment, we raſhly repeat it for ourſelves. The ſcripture aſſures us that the ways of God are pleaſant, but we will not be perſuaded. Experience proves that the way of tranſgreſſors is hard, but we reſiſt the conviction, and hurry on in a round of continual diſappointment. Are the proud, the

covetous, the voluptuous, or the ambitious, happy? I appeal to conscience.

2. There is only one right way, but a thousand ways of being wrong. If you are not following him, who has said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life* *, you are wandering, you are far from God; for none can come to the Father but by him: and far from peace, for there can be no true peace in the mind unless he bestows and maintains it. The profane and the self-righteous, the open sinner and the hypocrite, the lover of pleasure and the lover of gold, the formal Papist and the formal Protestant, though they seem to travel different roads, though they pity or censure each other, will meet at last (unless the grace of God prevent) in the same state of final and hopeless misery. It is grievous to a spiritual and benevolent mind, to see those who are all wrong disputing among themselves which of them is right. Each one is ready to think himself wise, if the folly in which he allows himself be not precisely of the same kind with that which he condemns in his neighbour. But the scripture is the invariable rule, to which it is your duty and interest to be conformed now; for it is given by the inspiration and authority of God, and is the standard by which you must be judged at last. Whatever character you bear amongst men, if you have not faith and holiness, you certainly are not in the way of life. For it is written, *He that believeth not, shall be damned* †; and again, it is written, *Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord* ‡.

3. As wandering sheep are liable to innumerable dangers which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such is our condition, until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are stopped, and turned, and brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. Oh! the misery of man while living without God in the world! He

* John xiv. 6. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Heb. xii. 14.

He is expoſed every hour to the ſtroke of death, which would at once ſeparate him from all that he loves, and plunge him into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. And at preſent he is perpetually haraſſed with cares and fears, with wants and woes, without guidance or refuge; and yet ſo blinded as to think himſelf ſafe, and that his crooked wandering ways will lead him to happineſs!

II. *An acknowledgment of mercy.* Where ſin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Man ſinned, and MESSIAH ſuffered. *The Lord hath laid*, or cauſed to meet upon him, *the iniquity of us all*, that is, the puniſhment due to them. The evils we had deſerved were in purſuit of us; but Jeſus interpoſed, and they all ſeized upon him, and he endured them, that we might be ſpared. Do we aſk upon what grounds? It was on the ground of his voluntary ſubſtitution for ſinners, as their covenant head and repreſentative.

So much correſpondent to this appointment obtains amongſt men, as may ſhew that the idea accords with our notion of juſtice. If a man be unable to pay a debt, and the creditor ſhould exact the payment from a third perſon who was no way concerned, it would, with reaſon, be deemed a very oppreſſive action. But if it be known that this perſon became freely bound and reſponſible for the debtor, he is allowed to be juſtly liable. But in the preſent caſe I make no appeal to human cuſtoms. It is a divine appointment, and therefore is and muſt be right. It was a great deſign, the triumph of infinite wiſdom, the higheſt effect of the love of God. It is revealed, not to be ſubmitted to our diſcuſſion, or that we may ſit in judgment upon the propriety of the meaſure, but it demands our higheſt admiration and praiſe; and, like the ſun, brings with it that light by which the whole ſyſtem of our knowledge is illuminated. For till we know this great truth,

and are able to ſee its influence upon every thing we are related to, whatever attainments we may boaſt, we are in fact encompaſſed with thick darkneſs, with darkneſs which may be felt. For the accompliſhment of this deſign, the Son of God was ſo manifeſted in the nature of man, that he, and they who believe in him, participate in a real, though myſtical union, and are conſidered as one: he their living head: they his body, conſiſting of many members; each of them repreſented by him, accepted in him, and deriving from his fulneſs their life, their light, their ſtrength, and their joy.

1. He was thus appointed and conſtituted before the world began, according to the holy counſel and covenant ſettled from everlaſting * for the redemption of ſinners. For the fall of man, which rendered his interpoſition neceſſary, was not an unexpected contingency, but was foreſeen and provided for before man was created upon the earth, yea, before the foundations of the earth were laid.

2. After man had ſinned, this glorious Head and Surety made known the certainty and benefit of his mediation, and engagement on the behalf of ſinners, according to the good pleaſure of his wiſdom, and as the caſe required; otherwiſe, upon the entrance of ſin, the full execution of the ſentence of the law denounced againſt the offenders might perhaps have immediately followed: but he revealed himſelf. He ſhewed mercy to Adam, covenanted with Noah, walked with Abraham, converſed with Moſes, dwelt with his church in the wilderneſs, and was known by the name of the *Holy One of Iſrael* †. David aſcribes to the Shepherd of Iſrael the name of Jehovah, and Iſaiah declares, that the Lord of Hoſts is the Huſband of the church. Theſe characters of Shepherd, and Bridegroom, and Huſband, are appropriated to MESSIAH in the New Teſtament. He therefore

* Prov. viii. 31. Tit. i. 2. † Iſ. liv. 5. Pſal. xxiii. 1.

fore is Jehovah, the Lord of Hoſts, whom Abraham, David, and Iſaiah, worſhipped, or his appearance upon earth would be evidently to the diſadvantage of thoſe who believe in him. If he were not God, he would be a creature, for there is no medium; and conſequently our Shepherd would be infinitely inferior to that Almighty Shepherd, who was the refuge, the truſt, and the ſalvation of his people, before MESSIAH was manifeſted in the fleſh.

3. In the fulneſs of time he veiled his glory. He *who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made of a woman, made under the law* *. Then the union between him and the people whom he came into the world to ſave was completed; becauſe *the children were partakers of fleſh and blood, he likewiſe took part of the ſame* † The *Word, who in the beginning was God, and was with God, was made fleſh* ‡. And in our nature, though he knew no ſin, he was treated as a ſinner for us, to declare the righteouſneſs of God, in his forbearance and goodneſs to all who had been ſaved in former ages, and in the forgiveneſs and ſalvation of all who ſhould truſt in him to the end of time. He ſuffered *once*, once for all, *the juſt for the unjuſt, to bring us to God.* And now God is revealed, not only as merciful, but as juſt, *in juſtifying him which believeth in Jeſus.* God is well-pleaſed in him, and for his ſake, with all who accept him. Their ſins are expiated by his ſufferings ‖; and his perfect righteouſneſs, the whole of his obedience unto death, is the conſideration or ground on which they are accounted righteous.

By virtue of this union likewiſe he is their life. They receive of his fulneſs, as the branches § derive their life and fruitfulneſs from the tree whereon they

* Phil. ii. 6, 7. † Heb. ii. 14. ‡ John i. 1.
‖ Rom. iv. 6. Jer. xxiii. 6. § John xv. 1.

grow; therefore the apoſtle ſaid, *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me* *. This is the great myſtery of Chriſtianity, which words alone cannot explain: it is a divine appointment, hidden from thoſe who are wiſe and prudent in their own ſight, but revealed to all who, with the ſimplicity of children, are deſirous of being taught of God, and wait patiently upon him, in the uſe of his preſcribed means, for the light and influence of his Holy Spirit.

From this ſubject, the ſubſtitution of MESSIAH for ſinners, we may learn,

1. How to eſtimate the evil of ſin. That ſin is a great evil, is evident by its effects. It deprived Adam of the life and preſence of God, and brought death and all natural evil into the world. It cauſed the deſtruction of the old world by water. It is the ſource of all the miſery with which the earth is now filled; it will kindle the laſt great conflagration; yea, it has already kindled that fire which ſhall never be quenched. But in no view does the ſinfulneſs of ſin appear ſo ſtriking as in this wonderful effect—the ſuffering and death of MESSIAH: That notwithſtanding the dignity of his perſon, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, and that though he prayed in his agonies, *that if it were poſſible the cup might paſs from him* †; yet, if ſinners were to be ſaved, it was indiſpenſably neceſſary that he ſhould drink it. This ſhews the evil of ſin in the ſtrongeſt light; and in this light it is viewed by all who derive life from his death, and healing from his wounds. We may be afraid of the conſequences of ſin from other conſiderations; but it is only by looking to him who was pierced ‡ for our tranſgreſſions, that we can learn to hate it.

2. The complete juſtification of thoſe who believe in him. They are ‖ delivered from all condemnation. Every charge againſt them is over-ruled by this plea, *that*

* Gal. ii. 20. † Luke xxiii. 42. ‡ Zech. xii. 10. ‖ Rom. viii. 1.

that Chriſt has died, and is riſen on their behalf, *and ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.* And though they are ſtill in a ſtate of diſcipline, for the mortification of ſin yet remaining in them; and though, for the trial, exerciſe, and growth of their faith, it is ſtill needful that they paſs through many tribulations; yet none of theſe are ſtrictly and properly penal: They are not the tokens of God's diſpleaſure, but fatherly chaſtiſements, and tokens of his love, deſigned to promote the work of grace in their hearts, and to make them partakers of his holineſs *. Though neceſſary at preſent, they will not be neceſſary long; and therefore the hour is at hand when all tears ſhall be wiped away from their eyes, and they ſhall weep no more. His true ſervants, in the midſt of the ſtorms by which they are toſſed on the tempeſtuous ſea of this life, are no leſs ſafe, and, notwithſtanding their imperfections, are no leſs beloved, than thoſe who have already eſcaped out of the reach of every evil, and are now before the throne.

3. The reaſon why believers are not wearied, nor overpowered, by all the difficulties of their ſervice, nor by all the arts and efforts of their enemies. They are one with Chriſt. He who has all power in heaven and in earth is engaged for their ſupport. When they faint, he revives them; when they are wounded, he heals them; when their foot ſlippeth, he upholdeth them. He has ſaid, *becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.* Therefore, who can prevail againſt them, when their *life is hidden with Chriſt in God* †? And farther, the knowledge of their Saviour's love, and of the holy, awful, yet amiable and endearing character of God diſplayed in his mediation, is the ſource of their love, gratitude, and cheerful obedience. It is this makes hard things eaſy, and bitter things ſweet. *The love of Chriſt conſtraineth them* ‡. They look to him and are enlightened. And when they

* Heb. xii. 6,—11. † Col. iii. 3. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

they conſider who he is, in what way, and at what a price he redeemed them, and what he has prepared for them; when they attend to his gracious word, *Fear none of thoſe things which thou ſhalt ſuffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life* *: they out of weakneſs, are made ſtrong; they are inſpired with freſh courage; they take up their croſs with cheerfulneſs, and can adopt the language of the apoſtle, *None of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear, ſo that I may finiſh my courſe with joy* †.

* Rev. ii. 10. † Acts xx. 24.

SER-

SERMON XXI.

Meſſiah derided upon the Croſs.

PSALM xxii. 7, 8.

All they that ſee me, laugh me to ſcorn; they ſhoot out the lip, they ſhake the head, ſaying, He truſted in the Lord, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, ſeeing he delighted in him.

FALLEN man, though alienated from the life of God, and degraded, with reſpect to many of his propenſities and purſuits, to a level with the beaſts that periſh, is not wholly deſtitute of kind and compaſſionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures. While ſelf-intereſt does not interfere, and the bitter paſſions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, are not rouſed into exerciſe, he has a degree of inſtinctive ſympathy with them in their ſufferings, and a diſpoſition to aſſiſt them, if he can do it without much detriment to himſelf. The ſource of theſe ſocial feelings we expreſs by the term *humanity*; which ſeems to imply a conſciouſneſs that they properly belong to our nature, and that we *ought*, at leaſt, to be always, and univerſally affected in this manner, when occaſions offer. But while the heart is under the government of ſelf, our humanity is very partial and limited; and it is to be aſcribed to the goodneſs of God, rather than to any real goodneſs in man, that it is not wholly extinguiſhed. Were this the caſe, and were the native evils of the heart left to exert themſelves in their full ſtrength and without controul, earth would be the very image of hell, and there could be no ſuch thing as ſociety. But to pre-

vent things from running into utter confuſion, God mercifully preſerves in mankind ſome ſocial diſpoſitions. They are, however, ſo weak in themſelves, ſo powerfully counteracted by the ſtronger principles of our depravity, and ſo frequently ſuppreſſed by obſtinate habits of wickedneſs; that in the preſent ſtate of things, we may almoſt as juſtly define man (whatever impropriety there may ſeem in the expreſſion), by ſaying, *He is an inhuman creature*, as by aſcribing to him the benevolent properties of *humanity*.

The rage, cruelty, and ſavage inſenſibility, with which ſin and Satan have poiſoned our nature, never appear in ſo ſtrong a light, as when they aſſume a religious form; when ignorance, bigotry, and blind zeal, oppoſe the will and grace of God, under a pretence of doing him ſervice. By this infatuation, every hateful paſſion is ſanctified, and every feeling of humanity ſtifled. Thus, though the ſufferings of the moſt atrocious malefactors uſually excite pity in the ſpectators, and often draw tears from their eyes, yet the agonies of God's perſecuted ſervants, under the moſt exquiſite tortures which malice could invent, have frequently raiſed no other emotions than thoſe of deriſion and ſcorn. My text leads us to conſider the higheſt inſtance of this kind. The 22d Pſalm undoubtedly refers to MESSIAH. It begins with the very words which he uttered upon the croſs; nor could David ſpeak of himſelf, when he ſaid, *They pierced my hands and my feet.* *He* was God's ſervant in the moſt eminent ſenſe; and the ſervice he performed, was an uninterrupted courſe of benevolence to the ſouls and bodies of men. He ſpent his life in *going about doing good* *; nor could his enemies fix a ſingle ſtain upon his conduct. Yet they thirſted for his blood; and, becauſe he came into the world to ſave ſinners, they accompliſhed their cruel deſigns. We have already ſeen how he was treated by the ſervants

* Acts x. 38.

vants and by the ſoldiers, when condemned by the Jewiſh council, and by the Roman governor. This prophecy was fulfilled when he hung upon the croſs. There have been perſons in our own days, whoſe crimes have excited ſuch deteſtation, that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before, and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power.—Yet when theſe very obnoxious perſons have been executed according to their ſentence, if, perhaps, there was not one ſpectator who wiſhed them to eſcape, yet neither was one found ſo loſt to ſenſibility, as to inſult them in their dying moments. But when Jeſus ſuffers, *all that ſee him, laugh him to ſcorn; they ſhoot out the lip, they ſhake the head;* they inſult his character, and his hope. The evangeliſts furniſh us with an affecting comment upon this paſſage. They inform us by whom he was thus ſcorned and derided—they mention ſome circumſtances, which ſtrongly mark the peculiar and exceſſive contempt with which he was treated; and they take notice of the eſpecial ſcope and object of their inſults, namely, the gracious purpoſe he had often expreſſed towards ſinners, and the ſtrong confidence he had avowed in God his Father.

I. The *perſons* who ſcorned and derided him, were various, and of different characters.

1. *The chief prieſts, elders, and rulers of the people.* When theſe, who were held in ignorant admiration by the multitude, ſet the example, we do not wonder that it was generally followed. They had been his moſt avowed and determined enemies, they had long conſpired to take away his life, and in the appointed hour their plots were permitted to ſucceed. They now rejoiced in their ſucceſs. By their office as teachers and expounders of the law, they ought to have pointed him out to the people as the object of their reverence and hope; but having rejected him themſelves, they employed all their authority and in-

fluence

fluence to make him the object of general contempt. And leſt the extremity of his torments ſhould awaken ſentiments of commiſeration in the multitude, they were the firſt, and the loudeſt, in reviling him, as he hung upon the croſs.

2. *The populace derided him.* They had been inſtigated by the prieſts to demand his death of Pilate, when he was deſirous of diſmiſſing him, and rather to inſiſt that Barabbas ſhould be ſpared *. The populace, though no leſs ignorant, were leſs malicious than their leaders. At different times, when they heard his public diſcourſes, and ſaw his wonderful works, they had been ſtaggered, and conſtrained to ſay, *Is not this the ſon of David?* and not many days before the popular cry had been ſtrongly in his favour †; though quickly after it was, *Crucify him, crucify him* ‡. As the ſea, though ſometimes ſmooth, is always diſpoſed to obey the impulſe of the wind, ſo the common people, though eaſily rouſed to oppoſe the truth, would perhaps be quiet, if they were left to themſelves; but there are ſeldom wanting artful and deſigning men, who, by a pretended regard for religion, and by miſrepreſentations, work upon their paſſions and prejudices, and ſtir them up to a compliance with their purpoſes. The prieſts by degrees wrought the populace up, firſt to reject MESSIAH, and then to join their leaders in mocking and deriding him.

3. *The Roman ſoldiers*, who had contemptuouſly clothed him with a ſcarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him in deriſion, continued to mock him when hanging upon the croſs. The Romans, to whom many monarchies were become ſubject and tributary, affected to deſpiſe the name of king; and they held the Jewiſh nation in peculiar contempt. The title, therefore, of King of the Jews, affixed to his croſs, afforded them a ſubject for the keeneſt ſarcaſm.

4. Yea,

* Matt. xxvii. 20. † Matt. xxi. 10, 11. ‡ Luke xxiii. 21.

4. Yea, ſuch is the hardneſs of the human heart, *that one of the malefactors* *, who was crucified by his ſide, unaffected with his own guilt, and inſenſible of the juſt judgment of God, and of the account he was ſoon to render at his awful tribunal, ſeemed to ſeek ſome relief in the midſt of his agonies, by joining with the prieſts and people, in railing on the innocent Jeſus, who was ſuffering before his eyes. Thus he was the object of univerſal deriſion. They who were at the greateſt diſtance in character and ſentiment, who differed from, deſpiſed, and hated each other, on other accounts, united as one man, in expreſſing every poſſible mark of hatred and ſcorn againſt him, who had done nothing amiſs.

II. They ſhewed their ſcorn in the moſt pointed and cruel manner. Not only they who had clamoured for his death derided him, but others who were only paſſing by upon their ordinary occaſions, could not paſs on till they had ſtopped a while to inſult him, wagging their heads, and reminding him of what he had formerly ſaid, and charging him with the ſuppoſed folly and arrogance of his claims. They jeſted upon his wants; when he ſaid, *I thirſt*, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They jeſted upon his words; when he uttered his dolorous complaint, *Eli, Eli, lama ſabacthani, My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* ſome of them, with a malicious turn, (which poſſibly was applauded for wit by others), from the ſound of the beginning of the ſentence, took occaſion to ſuggeſt, that by ſaying, *Eli, Eli,* he called for Elias, the prophet, to come to his aſſiſtance. Alas! of what dreadful malignity and obduracy is the heart of man capable? How may we conceive the heavenly hoſt to have been affected with this ſcene, when they beheld their Lord, the object of their worſhip and ſupreme love, thus treated by ſinners? *But it behoved him thus to ſuffer* †: for

* Luke xxiii. 39. † Luke xxiv. 26.

for he had undertaken to expiate the ſins of many of his murderers, and to offer ſuch ſatisfaction to the juſtice and law of God, as might render it conſiſtent with his holineſs and truth, to pardon the vileſt offenders, who ſhould truſt in his name, in all future ages. Therefore there was no voice, arreſt, or interpoſition from the heavenly world—thus he muſt be tormented, thus he muſt be ſcorned, and ſuſpended as a ſpectacle to angels and to men, till he had paid the full price of redemption, and could ſay, *It is finiſhed.* Then, and not till then, he bowed his head, and breathed out his ſpirit into his Father's hands. There were, however, atteſtations to his dignity, in this his loweſt ſtate. He ſhewed, by his gracious anſwer to the penitent malefactor, that he had ſtill authority upon earth to forgive ſin, and to ſave to the uttermoſt; and the ſun withdrew his light, and the rocks rent, though daring ſinners derided and mocked.

III. The bulk of the people bore their part in this tragedy through precipitation and ignorance. In his prayer for their forgiveneſs (a prayer which was ſignally anſwered after his aſcenſion) he mentioned the only extenuation their wickedneſs could poſſibly admit, *They knew not what they did.* It was otherwiſe with thoſe who were principally concerned in procuring his death. Long before, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they aſcribed them to the agency of Beelzebub. By this malicious, wilful oppoſition to the ſtrongeſt evidence of fact, againſt the conviction of their own minds, and by their violent, determined rejection of his miſſion, they committed the unpardonable ſin. They ſpoke and ſinned againſt the Holy Spirit. This ſin no one can have committed, while he is fearful leſt he has committed it; for it eſſentially conſiſts in a deliberate and wilful refuſal of the only means of ſalvation. It is the ſign of final abſolute impenitence. They who had thus aſcribed his miracles to Beelzebub, expreſſed the ſame height

height of enlightened malice againſt him in his dying agonies, and there was a poignancy in their inſults, of which the ignorant multitude were not capable.

1. They reproached his great deſign for which he came into the world. *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave* *. How different is the force of the ſame words, according to the intention of the ſpeaker! When they ſaid, *His blood be upon us, and upon our children* †, they ſpoke the very language of the hearts of thoſe who love him, and who derive all their hopes, and all their happineſs, from the application of his blood to their conſciences. But, to themſelves, it proved the moſt dreadful imprecation. So, it will be the grateful acknowledgment of his people in time, and to eternity, that when he was reſolved to ſave *them*, the difficulties in the way were ſo great, that neither his prayers, nor his tears, nor his unſpotted innocence, could prevail to ſave *himſelf*. But, for this his love to ſinners, his enemies reviled him. Nor would they have offered to believe if he would come down from the croſs, had they ſuppoſed there was the leaſt probability of ſuch an event; for they had often rejected evidence equal to what they now demanded.

2. They reproached him for his truſt and confidence in God. He had ſaid, that *God was his own Father* ‡: and they underſtood him to uſe the expreſſion in ſo high a ſenſe, as thereby to make himſelf equal with God. Had they miſunderſtood him, had he not really intended what they laid to his charge, ſurely he would have explained himſelf. This was the very ground of their proceeding againſt him before the council, and the formal reaſon of the ſentence of death they pronounced againſt him. How often did he appeal to the teſtimony of the ſcriptures, and of John, whom they durſt not but acknowledge to have been a prophet, and to his own mighty works, in

* Matt. xxvii. 42. † Ver. 25. ‡ John v. 18. *Ibid.*

in ſupport of his claim? But having faſtened him upon the croſs, they triumphed, and unwittingly expreſſed their exultation, in the very words which David had foretold ſhould be uſed to MESSIAH. So exactly were the ſcriptures fulfilled, by thoſe who uſed their utmoſt endeavours to evade them, and to prevent their accompliſhment.

But what is all this to us? It is very much to us. Chriſt could ſuffer but once, yet we read of thoſe *who crucify him afreſh*. His goſpel repreſents his perſonal miniſtry, declares his character, reveals his love, produces the ſame effects in thoſe who receive it, and they who oppoſe it are conſidered as oppoſing him, and are influenced by the ſame ſpirit which inſtigated the unbelieving Jews. It is to be hoped that many reject and ſcorn it, as the multitude did of old, through ignorance; and that the interceſſion of him, who prayed for thoſe that knew not what they did, will prevail for their converſion. Whenever their eyes are opened, *they will be pricked to the heart* *, and will then gladly enquire of thoſe whom now they deſpiſe, What they muſt do to be ſaved? But it is to be feared, there are in Chriſtian countries many perſons who too nearly reſemble the ſpirit and conduct of the Jewiſh rulers; whoſe oppoſition proceeds from rooted enmity to the truth, perſiſted in againſt light that has ſometimes forced upon their minds, and who, though convinced, will not be perſuaded. They who deſpiſe, calumniate, and ſcorn the believers of the goſpel, would certainly offer the like treatment to the Author of it, if he was within their reach. They are ill-treated for his ſake, and he conſiders it as an affront to himſelf. Thus he ſaid to Saul of Tarſus, when breathing out threatenings againſt his diſciples, *Why perſecuteſt thou me?* They who reject his miniſters, reject him †. They who ſpeak diſdainfully of his dying himſelf to ſave others; they

* Acts ii. 37. † Luke x. 16.

they who reproach or ridicule the humble confidence of his people; who cenſure and revile their hopes and comforts derived from his good word, as enthuſiaſm or hypocriſy; who have no compaſſion for their diſtreſſes, but rather wound them as with a ſword in their bones, ſaying unto them, *Where is now your God*?* are certainly treading, if not altogether with equal vehemence, in the footſteps of the Jewiſh rulers.—May the Lord in mercy ſhew them the danger of their path, and give them a timely apprehenſion of the deſtruction to which it leads! That they may humble themſelves to his will, implore his pardon, eſpouſe his cauſe, and experience the comforts and privileges of that goſpel which they have hitherto reviled and ſcorned.

* Pſal. cxv. 2.

SER-

SERMON XXII.

Meſſiah unpitied, and without Comforter.

PSAL. lxix. 20.

Reproach [Rebuke] *hath broken my heart, and I am full of heavineſs; and I looked for ſome to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.*

THE greatneſs of ſuffering cannot be certainly eſtimated by the ſingle conſideration of the immediate apparent cauſe; the impreſſion it actually makes upon the mind of the ſufferer muſt likewiſe be taken into the account. That which is a heavy trial to one perſon, may to another be much lighter, and perhaps no trial at all. And a ſtate of outward proſperity, in which the eye of a byſtander can ſee nothing wanting to happineſs, may be, and I doubt not often is, a ſtate of torment to the poſſeſſor. On the other hand, we know that the conſolations with which it has ſometimes pleaſed God to cheer his ſuffering ſervants, have enabled them to rejoice in the greateſt extremities. They have triumphed upon the rack, and while their fleſh was conſuming by the fire. The Lord has had many followers, who, for his ſake, have endured ſcourgings, and tortures, and terrible deaths, not only without reluctance or diſmay, but without a groan. But he himſelf was terrified, amazed, and filled with anguiſh, when he ſuffered for us. Shall we ſay, The diſciples, in ſuch caſes, have been ſuperior to their Maſter; when yet they acknowledged that they derived all their ſtrength and reſolution from him? This difference cannot be well accounted for by thoſe who deny that his ſufferings were a proper atonement for ſin, and who can

can ſee no other reaſon for his death, than that by dying he was to ſeal the truth of his doctrine, and to propoſe himſelf to us as an example of conſtancy and patience. But the great aggravation of MESSIAH's ſufferings, was the ſuſpenſion of thoſe divine ſupports which enable his people to endure the ſevereſt afflictions to which he calls them. Perhaps ſome perſons who acknowledge our Lord's true character, may, upon that ground, think his agonies leſs inſupportable, ſince he was not a mere man, but God in the human nature. It was, indeed, the dignity of his perſon, that gave influence and efficacy to all that he did and ſuffered for ſinners. It is likewiſe true, that the weight laid upon him was more than any mere creature could ſuſtain. I would ſpeak with reverence and reſerve upon a point which is too high for our weak minds fully to comprehend. But in whatever way the nature of man, which he aſſumed, was upheld by his eternal power and Godhead, we may venture to affirm, that he derived no ſenſible comfort from it. For we have his own teſtimony, that in this ſenſe *God had forſaken him.* The divine nature could neither bleed nor ſuffer. He was truly and properly a man, and as a man he ſuffered, and he ſuffered alone. Many of his ſervants have rejoiced while they were tormented, becauſe God overbalanced all they felt with the light of his countenance; but the Saviour himſelf, deprived of this light, experienced, to the uttermoſt, all that ſin deſerved, that was not inconſiſtent with the perfection of his character. My text expreſſes, ſo far as human words and ideas can reach, his exquiſite diſtreſs, when *he bore our ſins in his own body, upon the tree. Reproach broke his heart, and when he looked for pity and comfort, he found none.*

I. *Reproach hath broken my heart.* We muſt not confine our thoughts here to the reproach of his enemies. The paſſage in the *Meſſiah* expreſſes it agreeably

greeably to the verſion of the Pſalms uſed in our liturgy, *Thy rebuke.* Though *he knew no ſin, he was made ſin for us.* He was accounted and treated as a ſinner. Now a ſinner is deſervedly the greateſt object of contempt in the univerſe, and indeed the only object of deſerved contempt. Thus he incurred the reproach of the law and juſtice of God. The Holy Father, viewing the Son of his love in this light, as charged with the ſins of his people, forſook him. God infinitely hates ſin, and will have no fellowſhip with it; and of this he gave the moſt awful proof, by forſaking his beloved Son, when he took upon him to anſwer for the ſins of men. Then the ſword of the Almighty awoke * againſt him, and he ſpared him not.

This rebuke broke his heart. Let broken-hearted ſinners look by faith upon a broken-hearted Saviour. The phraſe denotes woe and dejection inconceivable, with a failure of all reſource. Any thing may be borne while the ſpirit, the heart, remains firm; but if the heart itſelf be broken, who can endure? *A wounded ſpirit who can bear* †?

It is not, therefore, ſurpriſing that he ſays, *I am full of heavineſs.* In the evangeliſts we read, that he *began to be ſore amazed, and very heavy* ‡; and he ſaid to his diſciples, *My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death.* The moſt emphatical words are uſed to deſcribe his ſenſation of the bitter conflict of his ſoul in the garden of Gethſemane, when as yet the hand of man had not touched him. He began to be *amazed* § or aſtoniſhed. It properly ſignifies, to be ſtruck with terror and ſurpriſe by ſome ſupernatural power, ſuch as Belſhazzar felt when he ſuddenly ſaw the hand-writing againſt him upon the wall ‖; and to be *very heavy* **, fated with grief, full, ſo as to be incapable of more. Some critics explain the word, as importing ſuch an oppreſſion of mind as quite

* Zech. xiii. 7. † Prov. xviii. 14. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 37. 38. Mark xiv. 33. § ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι. ‖ Dan. v. 6. ** ἀδημονειν.

quite unfits a perſon for converſe or ſociety, [compare Job xxx. 29.] He ſaid, *I am exceeding ſorrowful* *—ſurrounded, encompaſſed with ſorrows. It is added, he was in an *agony* †—a conſternation of mind, ſuch as ariſes from the proſpect of ſome impending, unavoidable evil; like the ſuſpenſe of mariners upon the point of ſhipwreck, who tremble equally at the view of the raging waves behind them, and the rocky ſhore before their eyes, on which they expect in a few moments to be daſhed. The evils he was to bear, and to expiate, were now collecting to a point, and formed a dark tremendous ſtorm, juſt ready to break upon his devoted head; and the proſpect filled his ſoul with unutterable horror; ſo that his ſweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Many have ſweat under extremity of pain or terror; but his agonies, and the effect of them, were peculiar to himſelf: His ſweat was blood.

This is not a ſubject for declamation. It rather becomes us to adore in humble ſilence the manifeſtation *of the goodneſs and ſeverity of God* ‡, in the Redeemer's ſufferings, than to indulge conjecture and the flights of imagination. What is expreſsly revealed we may aſſert, contemplate, and admire. *His ſoul was made an offering for ſin* ‖. We know but little of the extreme *malignity* of ſin, becauſe we have but faint views of the majeſty, holineſs, and goodneſs of God, againſt whom it is committed. Yet a ſingle ſin, if clothed with all its aggravations, and the guilt of it brought home with power to the heart, is ſufficient to make the ſinner a terror to himſelf. Adam had ſinned but once, when he loſt all comfort and confidence in God, and ſought to hide himſelf. We have but ſlight thoughts of the *extent* of ſin. Not only poſitive diſobedience, but want of conformity to the law of God, is ſinful. Every riſing

* περίλυπος. † αγωνία. Luke xxii. 44. ‡ Rom. xi. 22. ‖ Iſ. liii. 10.

ſing thought which does not comport with that reverence, dependence, and love, which is due to God, from creatures conſtituted, furniſhed, and indebted, as we are, is ſinful. The ſins of one perſon, in thought, word, and deed, ſins of omiſſion and commiſſion, are innumerable. What then is contained in the collective idea, in what the ſcripture calls, *The ſin of the world?* What then muſt be the atonement, the conſideration, on the account of which, the great God is no leſs righteous than merciful, in forgiving the ſins, which his inviolable truth, and the honour of his government, engage him to puniſh. And they are puniſhed, though forgiven. They were charged upon Jeſus, they expoſed him to a rebuke which broke his heart. They filled him with heavineſs. When, therefore, we are aſſured that the juſtice of God is ſatisfied, with reſpect to every ſinner of the race of mankind, who, in obedience to the divine command, makes the ſufferings of the Saviour his plea for pardon, and truſts in him for ſalvation; and that upon this one ground they are freed from all condemnation, and accepted as children; when we are told, that the glory of the divine perfections is diſplayed in the higheſt, by this method of ſaving millions, who deſerved to periſh; we ſafely infer the greatneſs of the cauſe, from the greatneſs of the effect. The ſufferings of Chriſt, which free a multitude of ſinners from the guilt of innumerable ſins, muſt have been inconceivably great indeed!

II Under this accumulated diſtreſs, though his will was perfectly ſubmiſſive to the will of God, and his determination fixed to endure all that the caſe required; yet, as he was truly a man, he felt *like* a man. His fortitude was very different from a ſtoical hardneſs of ſpirit. All the affections of pure humanity, whatever does not imply ſin, (ſuch as impatience under ſuffering, and an undue, premature deſire

desire of deliverance) operated in him, as they might do in one of us. It was no impeachment of his innocence, or of his willingness, that he wished, if it were possible, for some relief or alleviation of his misery. *He looked*, as we do when we are in heaviness, for *some to have pity on him, and to comfort him*, but there was none. Though the pity of our friends is often ineffectual, and can afford us no real assistance; yet it gives a little relief to have those about us to whom we can open our minds; who will sympathize with us, and compassionately attend to our complaints, if they can do no more. And to be neglected and forsaken in extremity, especially by those who have professed great friendship, or are under great obligations to us, will be felt as an aggravation of the most distressing case that can be imagined. But thus it was with MESSIAH. He had to complain, not only of the cruelty of his enemies, but of the insensibility and inconstancy of those who had professed the most cordial attachment to him. The impression thus made upon him as a man was such, that it is distinctly specified in the prophetical enumeration of the ingredients which composed the bitter cup of his sufferings.

He was not only *apprehended* by cruel men, but *betrayed into their hands* by one whom he had admitted into the number of his select apostles, who had been employed in his service, favoured with access to him in his more retired hours, and was present, with the rest, when he kept his last passover, and took his solemn and affectionate leave of them, before he entered upon his passion. It was not an avowed enemy, but one of the twelve who dipped with him in the dish, that was guilty of this enormous ingratitude and treachery. How keen are our resentments, if those to whom we have shewn great kindness are discovered to have studied our ruin while they wore the mask of friendship? Though

MESSIAH was incapable of any ſinful perturbation of mind, he was very capable of being painfully affected by the conduct of Judas: he had reaſon to look for pity from him, but he found none.

When he entered the garden of Gethſemane, he commanded, may I not ſay, he intreated, his diſciples to tarry there and watch with him. And to engage their utmoſt attention, he ſpoke plainly to them of his diſtreſs, ſaying, *My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death.* Yet when he returned to them, the firſt, the ſecond, yea, the third time, *he found them ſleeping.* How tender, yet how forcible was his expoſtulation, *Could ye not watch one hour* *! What! could they know that their Lord was in an agony, wreſtling with ſtrong cries and tears, and yet ſleep! as regardleſs of his ſorrows as of their own approaching danger! Were our deareſt friends to ſhow themſelves equally inſenſible when we were in extreme anguiſh, would not their indifference wound our ſpirits? He alſo was a man; and we may conceive it ſome addition to his grief, that when he looked to them for pity and comfort, he found none.

When he was apprehended, notwithſtanding their former proteſtation of zeal and love, *they all forſook him and fled* †. They ſought their own ſafety, and left him in the hands of his enemies. The Apoſtle Paul was thus deſerted, and his expreſſions intimate that he felt it. *At my firſt anſwer, no man ſtood by me, all men forſook me* ‡. He had imbibed likewiſe the ſpirit of his Maſter, and prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. And though the Lord Jeſus pitied and excuſed the weakneſs of his diſciples, and permitted them to take care of themſelves, it was in them an inſtance how little he could depend upon thoſe who were under the ſtrongeſt obligations to him.

But

* Matth. xxvii. 40. † Matth. xxvi. 56. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 16.

But Peter followed his Lord to the hall of the High Prieſt, and there ſaw him, with his own eyes, inſulted, arraigned, and unjuſtly condemned. Might he not expect that *Peter*, the moſt active and earneſt of all his followers, would have pitied him at leaſt at ſuch a time. Alas! inſtead of pitying him, *Peter denied him*; he denied, with oaths and imprecations, that he had any knowledge of him, whom he had ſeen transfigured upon the mount, and agonizing in the garden. We read, *That the Lord turned and looked upon Peter* *. Who can conceive the energy of that look? It was full of meaning, and Peter well underſtood it. Surely, though a look of tenderneſs and compaſſion, it conveyed the expoſtulation of an injured benefactor, no leſs forcibly, than if all who were preſent had heard him ſay, "Peter, is this "the pity I am to expect from thee?"

When he was nailed to the croſs, he was ſurrounded only by enemies. Theſe, as we have ſeen, far from pitying, or attempting to comfort him, derided and mocked him. How have ſome of us felt for our friends in their dying hours, though we have ſeen every poſſible attention paid to them, and every thing provided and done for them that could adminiſter to their relief and comfort! But they who have the faith which realizes unſeen things, have beheld their *beſt* friend expiring in tortures, and inſulted by his murderers in his laſt moments.

But had all his diſciples been near him, and had all his enemies been his friends, ſtill, in *his* ſituation, he would have been alone. The loſs of the light of God's countenance will, to the ſoul that has enjoyed it, create a univerſal ſolitude, and render every earthly good taſteleſs, in proportion as that ſoul is united to him in love; and ſtill more, if there be ſuperadded a ſenſe of his diſpleaſure. They who have never taſted that the Lord is good, not having

* Luke xxiv. 61.

known the difference, can have no conception of this ſubject. Their minds are at preſent occupied with earthly things; and while they are thus engaged with trifles, they cannot believe, though they are repeatedly told it, that to an immortal ſpirit, a ſeparation from the favour of God involves in it the very eſſence of miſery. But ſhould death ſurpriſe them in their ſins, tear them from all that they have ſeen and loved, and plunge them into an unknown, unchangeable world, then (alas! too late!) they will be ſenſible of their immenſe, irreparable loſs, in being cut off from the fountain of life and comfort. A ſuſpenſion of this divine preſence, with an awful ſenſe and feeling of what thoſe for whom he made himſelf reſponſible deſerved, was the moſt dreadful part of the Redeemer's ſufferings.—He was perfectly united to the will and love of his heavenly Father, and, by the perfect holineſs of his nature, incapable of taſting ſatisfaction in any thing elſe, if his preſence were withdrawn. But when he endured the curſe of the law for us, *he looked to God for pity and comfort, but he found none.*

In this glaſs we are to contemplate the demerit of ſin. But there are ſome ſufferings due to the impenitent ſinner, of which MESSIAH was not capable. I mean the conſciouſneſs of perſonal guilt, the gnawings of a remorſeful conſcience, and the rage of deſpair. If we add the idea of eternity to the whole, we may form ſome faint judgment of what they are delivered from who believe in him, and what miſery awaits thoſe who preſume to reject him. Awful thought! to reject the only Saviour. If they refuſe his mediation, they muſt anſwer in their own perſons. Then they will find no pity! no comforter. For who, or what, can comfort, when the Lord God Omnipotent ariſes to puniſh? What will your pleaſures, your wealth, or friends, do for you, when the

the hand of the Lord ſhall touch you to the quick? What ſmile can you expect will ſupport you againſt the terror of his frown?

Should any of you hear the *Meſſiah* performed again, then and there, if not before, may God impreſs upon your heart the ſenſe of this paſſage. Then you will underſtand, that the ſufferings of the Son of God are by no means a proper ſubject for the amuſement of a vacant hour.

SERMON XXIII.

No Sorrow like Meſſiah's Sorrow.

LAMENTATIONS i. 12.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? Behold, and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow!

ALTHOUGH the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, the law of Moſes, the Pſalms, and the prophecies *, bear an harmonious teſtimony to MESSIAH; it is not neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that every ſingle paſſage has an immediate and direct relation to him. A method of expoſition has frequently obtained, of a fanciful and allegorical caſt, under the pretext of ſpiritualizing the word of God. Ingenious men, and ſometimes men not very ingenious, have endeavoured to diſcover types and myſteries in the plaineſt hiſtorical parts, where we have no ſufficient evidence that the Holy Spirit intended to teach them. And upon very ſlight grounds a proof has been attempted of the great doctrines of the goſpel, which may be proved, much more ſafely and ſolidly, from the paſſages of ſcripture in which they are plainly and expreſsly revealed. But by taking this courſe, inſtead of throwing real light upon the places they have in this manner attempted to explain, they have perplexed their hearers and readers, and led them to queſtion, whether there be *any* fixed and determinate ſenſe of ſcripture that may be fully depended upon? It is true, when we have the authority of an inſpired expoſitor to lead us, we may follow him without fear; but this will not warrant us to ſtrike out

* Luke xxiv. 44.

out a path for ourſelves, and truſt to our conjectures, where we have not ſuch an infallible guide. The epiſtle to the Hebrews is a key to explain to us many paſſages in a higher ſenſe than perhaps we ſhould have otherwiſe underſtood them. But it is beſt for us to keep within ſafe bounds, and to propoſe our own ſentiments, when not ſupported by New-Teſtament authority, with great modeſty, leſt we ſhould incur the cenſure of being wiſe above what is written. I may, without ſcruple, affirm, that the hiſtory of Sarah and Hagar is an allegory referring to the two covenants, becauſe the Apoſtle Paul * has affirmed it before me; but if I attempted to ſpiritualize the hiſtory of Leah and Rachel likewiſe, you would not be bound to believe me without proof. I may preach the goſpel of Chriſt from a text which mentions the manna or the brazen ſerpent †, becauſe our Lord has expounded theſe things as typical of himſelf: But I muſt not be confident that every reſemblance which I think I can trace is the true ſenſe of the place; becauſe I may imagine many reſemblances and types which the ſcripture does not authoriſe.

There is, however, a uſeful way of preaching, *by accommodation*, that is, when the literal ſenſe is firſt clearly ſtated, to apply the paſſage, not directly to prove a doctrine as if really contained in it, but only to illuſtrate the doctrine expreſsly taught in other parts of the ſcripture. Thus, for inſtance, if the queſtion of Jonadab to Amnon ‡ were choſen for the ſubject of a diſcourſe, *Why art thou, being a king's ſon, lean from day to day?* The hiſtory of the context directly proves the malignity of ſinful inordinate deſire, and the miſery of thoſe who are under its dominion; that it poiſons every ſituation in life, and renders the ſinner incapable of ſatisfaction, though he were a king's ſon. The form of the queſtion might then

* Gal. iv. 24. † John iii 14. John vi. 31, 35. ‡ 2 Sam. iii. 4.

lead to obſerve, That believers are king's ſons, to ſhow what are the great privileges of their adoption; and to enquire how it comes to paſs, that many perſons ſo highly privileged are lean, that is uncomfortable, weak, and languiſhing in their profeſſion? Theſe points might not improperly be introduced by way of accommodation, though they are not directly deducible from the literal ſenſe of the queſtion.

The text I have juſt read to you has led me into this digreſſion. I find it in the ſeries of the paſſages in the *Meſſiah*; but I am not ſure, that in the literal ſenſe it immediately refers to him. It is a pathetic exclamation, by which the Prophet Jeremiah expreſſes his grief, or rather the grief of Jeruſalem, when the ſins of the people had given ſucceſs to the Chaldean army, and the temple and the city were deſtroyed. Jeruſalem is poetically conſidered as a woman, lately reigning a queen among the nations, but now a captive, diſhonoured, ſpoiled, and ſitting upon the ground. She intreats the commiſeration of thoſe who paſs by, and aſks, *If there be any ſorrow like unto her ſorrow?* Such a queſtion has often been in the heart and in the mouth of the afflicted, eſpecially in an hour of impatience. We are all, in our turns, diſpoſed to think our own trials peculiarly heavy, and our own caſes ſingular. But to them who aſk this queſtion, we may anſwer, Yes—there has been a ſorrow greater than yours, greater than the ſorrow of Jeremiah, or of Jeruſalem. They who have heard of the ſorrows of Jeſus, will ſurely, upon the hearing of this queſtion, be reminded of him, whether it was the intention of the prophet to perſonate him or not. If we conceive of him hanging upon the croſs, and ſpeaking in this language to us, *Was ever any ſorrow like my ſorrow?* muſt not we reply with admiration and gratitude, "No, Lord, never was love, never "was grief, like thine."

The

The expoſtulation and the queſtion are equally applicable to the ſufferings of MESSIAH. The former indeed is not inſerted in the Oratorio, but I am not willing to leave it out. The higheſt wonder ever exhibited to the world, to angels, and men, is the Son of God ſuffering and dying for ſinners. Next to this, hardly any thing is more aſtoniſhing to an enlightened mind—than the groſs and ſtupid inſenſibility with which the ſufferings of the Saviour are treated, and the indifference with which this wonderful event is regarded by creatures who are ſo nearly concerned in it. If they believe in him, they will be healed by his wounds, and live by his death. If they finally reject him, they muſt periſh; and their guilt and miſery will be greatly aggravated by what they have heard of him! But ſin has ſo blinded our underſtandings and hardened our hearts, that we have naturally no feeling either for him or for ourſelves.

I. Is the expoſtulation ſuited to any perſon here? Can I, with propriety, ſay to ſome who are now preſent, Has this ſubject been hitherto nothing to you? Then, ſurely, you have not heard of it before; and, therefore, now you do hear of it, you will, you muſt be affected. If you were to read in the common newſpapers, that a benevolent and excellent perſon had fallen into the hands of murderers, who had put him to death in the moſt cruel manner, would it not be ſomething to you? Could you avoid impreſſions of ſurpriſe, indignation, and grief? Surely, if this tranſaction were *news* to you, it would engroſs your thoughts. But alas! you have rather heard of it too often, till it has become to you as a worn-out tale. I am willing to take it for granted that you allow the fact. You believe that Jeſus Chriſt ſuffered under Pontius Pilate, was condemned by the Jews, and crucified by the Romans. And is it poſſible this ſhould be nothing to you? Is it too

inſignificant to engage or deſerve your attention? And yet, perhaps, you have wept at a repreſentation or a narrative which you knew was wholly founded in fiction. How ſtrange? What! the ſorrows of Jeſus nothing to you! when you admit that he ſuffered for ſinners, and will probably admit that *you* are a ſinner. No longer then boaſt of your ſenſibility! Your heart muſt be a heart of ſtone. Yet thus it is with too many; your tempers, your conduct, give evidence that hitherto the death of Jeſus has been nothing to you. You would not have acted otherwiſe, at leaſt you would not have acted worſe, if you had never heard of his name. Were his ſufferings any thing to you, is it poſſible, that you would live in the practice of thoſe ſins, for which no atonement could ſuffice but his blood? Were you duly affected by the thought of his crucifixion, is it poſſible that you could crucify him afreſh, and put him to open ſhame, by bearing the name of a Chriſtian, and yet living in a courſe unſuitable to the ſpirit and precepts of his goſpel? But if you are indifferent to *his* grief, is it nothing to you on your own account? What, is it nothing to you whether you are ſaved or periſh; whether you are found at his right, or his left hand, in the great day of his appearance; or whether he ſhall then ſay to you, *Come, ye bleſſed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you*; or, *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire* *? There is no medium, no alternative. If you refuſe this, there remaineth no other ſacrifice for ſin. This lamentable indifference to the Redeemer's ſorrows, is a full proof of the baſeneſs and wickedneſs of the human heart; and it is felt as ſuch, when the Holy Spirit convinces of ſin. Natural conſcience may excite a painful conviction of the ſinfulneſs of many actions. But this ſtupid unbelief of the heart is, if I may ſo ſpeak, the ſin of ſins, it is the root and ſource

* Matth. xxvi. 34, 41.

ſource of every evil, and yet ſo congenial to our very frame as we are depraved creatures, that God alone can make the ſinner feel it *; and when he does feel it, the ſenſe of it wounds and grieves him more than all his other ſins.

II. With reſpect to the queſtion, if we rightly underſtand what has been obſerved from the ſcripture-hiſtory, in the ſix preceding ſermons, concerning the particulars of his paſſion; we may anſwer, without heſitation, Never was ſuffering, or ſorrow, like that which MESSIAH endured in the day of the Lord's fierce anger. It is poſſible that hiſtory, which is little more than a detail of the cruelty and wickedneſs of mankind, may furniſh us with inſtances of many perſons who have ſuffered excruciating torments, and have even been mocked and inſulted in their agonies: But,

1. Was there ever a character of his dignity and excellence treated in ſuch a manner? Job conſidered his former ſtate as a great aggravation of his ſufferings. He enlarges upon the reſpect which had been ſhown him in his proſperity. *When I went out to the gate, through the city, the young men ſaw me and hid themſelves, the aged aroſe and ſtood up. When the ear heard me, then it bleſſed me; and when the eye ſaw me, it gave witneſs to me* †. But afterwards, ſpeaking of fools, of baſe men, of the vileſt of the earth, he adds, *Now am I their ſong, yea, their by-word. They abhor me, and ſpare not to ſpit in my face. They mar my path, they ſet forward my calamity, they come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters* ‡. But Jeſus was the Lord of glory. He whom all the angels of God worſhipped, was buffeted and ſpit upon by the loweſt rabble. If a great king was degraded from his throne, and expoſed to the deriſion of ſlaves, this would be a ſmall thing compared with

* John xvi. 9. † Job xxix 8. 11. ‡ Job xxx. 8.—14.

the humiliation of him, who, in his own right, was *King of kings, and Lord of lords.*

2. Was there ever ſo innocent a ſufferer? When Aaron loſt his two ſons, he held his peace *. A little before he had been guilty of making the golden calf. The remembrance of this offence compoſed his mind under his great trial. He ſaw that he deſerved a ſtill heavier puniſhment, and was ſilent. In like manner, David, when his rebellious ſon Abſalom conſpired againſt his life, was patient; he remembered the adultery and murder he had committed; and, though he mourned under his afflictions, he durſt not complain †. The malefactor upon the croſs ſubmitted to his ſentence, becauſe he was a malefactor, ſaying, *And we indeed juſtly* ‡. It is thus with all who know themſelves. Under their ſevereſt afflictions, they admit the propriety of the prophet's queſtion, *Why ſhould a living man complain* §? And they acknowledge, *It is of the Lord's great mercy they are not utterly conſumed* ‖. But Jeſus was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled; he had fulfilled the whole law, and had done nothing amiſs; yet he yielded himſelf *as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth* ¶.

3. Did ever any other ſufferer experience in an equal degree the day of God's fierce anger? In the greateſt of our ſufferings, in thoſe which bear the ſtrongeſt marks of the Lord's diſpleaſure, there is always ſome mitigation, ſome mixture of mercy. At the worſt, we have ſtill reaſon to acknowledge, that *he hath not dealt with us after our ſins, nor according to the full deſert of our iniquities* **. If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet we can give no ſufficient reaſon why we ſhould not. If we are exerciſed with poverty and loſſes,

* Lev. x. 3. † 2 Sam. xvi. 11. ‡ Luke xxiv. 41.
§ Lam. iii. 39. ‖ Ver 22. ¶ Iſ. liii. 7. ** Pſal. ciii. 10.

loſſes, yet ſomething worth the keeping, and more than we can juſtly claim, is ſtill left to us, at leaſt our lives are ſpared, though forfeited by ſin. If we are in diſtreſs of ſoul, toſſed with tempeſt and not comforted, we are not quite out of the reach of hope. Even if ſickneſs, pain, loſs, and deſpair, ſhould all overtake us in the ſame moment, all is ſtill leſs than we deſerve. Our proper deſert is hell, an excluſion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* Every thing ſhort of this is a mercy. But Jeſus, though he had no ſin of his own, bore the ſins of many. His ſufferings were indeed temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwiſe extreme. Witneſs the effects, his heavineſs unto death, his conſternation, his bloody ſweat, his eclipſe upon the croſs, when deprived of that preſence, which was his only, and his exceeding joy. On theſe accounts, *no ſorrow was like unto his ſorrow!*

The unknown ſorrows of the Redeemer are a continual ſource of ſupport and conſolation to his believing people. In his ſufferings they contemplate his atonement, his love, and his example, and they are animated by the bright and glorious iſſue. For he paſſed from death to life, from ſuffering to glory.

1. *His atonement*, apprehended by faith, delivers them from guilt and condemnation, gives them peace with God, and acceſs to him with liberty as children *. Being thus delivered from their heavy burden, and from the power of Satan, and having a way open for receiving ſupplies of grace and ſtrength, according to their day, they are prepared to take up their croſs, and to follow him.

2. *His love*, in ſubmitting to ſuch ſorrows for their ſakes, attaches their hearts to him. Great is the power of love! It makes hard things eaſy, and bitter

* Rom. v. 1. 2.

ter ſweet. Some of us can tell, or rather we cannot eaſily tell how much we would cheerfully do, or bear, or forbear, for the ſake of the perſon whom we dearly love. But this nobleſt principle of the ſoul never can exert itſelf with its full ſtrength, till it is ſupremely fixed upon its proper object. *The love of Christ has a constraining force indeed* *! It is ſtronger than death. It overcomes the world. And *we thus love him, becauſe he first loved us; becauſe he loved us, and gave himſelf for us* †.

3. *His example.* The thought that he ſuffered for them, arms them with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By his croſs they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. They no longer court its favour, nor are afraid of its frown. They know what they muſt expect, if they will be his ſervants, by the treatment he met with; and they are content. He who endured the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf for them, is worthy that they ſhould ſuffer likewiſe for him. It is their deſire, neither to provoke the oppoſition of men, nor to dread it. They commit themſelves to him, and are ſure that he will not expoſe them to ſuch ſufferings as he endured for them. So, likewiſe, under all the trials and afflictions which they endure more immediately from the hand of the Lord, a lively thought of *his* ſorrows reconciles them to their own. Thus by his ſtripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowſhip with him in his ſufferings.

4. Laſtly, if more were neceſſary, (and, ſometimes, through remaining infirmity and ſurrounding temptation, every conſideration is no more than neceſſary), they know that their Lord *paſſed through ſufferings to glory*. And they know (for they have his own gracious promiſe) *that if they ſuffer with him,*

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † 1 John iv. 19. Gal. ii. 20.

him, they ſhall alſo reign with him *. They are ſure, *that the ſufferings of the preſent life are not worthy to be compared with the joy which will then be revealed; and that when Chriſt, who is their life, ſhall appear, they alſo ſhall appear with him in glory* †; and therefore they are comforted in all their tribulation, and can ſay, *None of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I may finiſh my courſe with joy* ‡.

* John xii. 26. Rom. viii. 18. † Col. iii. 4. ‡ Acts xx. 24.

SER-

SERMON XXIV.

Meſſiah's Innocence vindicated.

ISAIAH liii. 8.

He was taken from priſon and from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken.

LET not plain Chriſtians be ſtumbled, becauſe there are difficulties in the prophetical parts of the ſcripture, and becauſe tranſlators and expoſitors ſometimes explain them with ſome difference as to the ſenſe. Whatever directly relates to our faith, practice, and comfort, may be plainly collected from innumerable paſſages, in which all the verſions, and all ſober expoſitors, are agreed. That there are ſome differences, will not appear ſtrange, if we conſider the antiquity of the Hebrew language, and that the Old Teſtament is the only book extant, which was written during the time that it was the common language of the people. For this reaſon we meet with many words which occur but once; and others, which do not occur frequently, are evidently uſed in more than one ſenſe. If we ſuppoſe, that a time ſhould come, when the Engliſh language ſhould be no longer ſpoken, and no more than a ſingle volume in it be preſerved, we may well conceive, that poſterity might differ as to the ſenſe of many expreſſions, notwithſtanding the aſſiſtances they might obtain, by comparing the Engliſh with the French, Dutch, and other languages, which were in uſe at the ſame period. Such aſſiſtance we derive from the Chaldee, Syriac,

Syriac, Greek, and other ancient verſions of the Old Teſtament, ſufficient to confirm us in the true ſenſe of the whole, and to throw light upon many paſſages otherwiſe dark and dubious; and yet there will remain a number of places, the ſenſe of which the beſt critics have not been able to fix with certainty. Farther, the prophecies are uſually expreſſed in the ſtyle of poetry, which, in all languages, is remote from the common forms of ſpeaking. The grand evidence to a humble mind, that the Holy Scripture was originally given by inſpiration of God, and that the verſion of it which by his good providence we are favoured with is authentic, is the effect it has upon the heart and conſcience when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And without this internal, experimental evidence, the learned are no leſs at a loſs than the vulgar.

An acquaintance with the Hebrew will perhaps ſuggeſt a meaning in this verſe (the latter part only of which is taken into the *Meſſiah*) which may not readily occur to an Engliſh reader. But the purport of it is plainly expreſſed in many other paſſages. The text is not merely a repetition of what was ſpoken before concerning the Redeemer's ſufferings; rather the declaration of what was to follow them begins here. It is the opening of a bright and glorious ſubject. He was taken, he was taken up, like Enoch and Elijah, from priſon, and from judgment, and who can declare his generation? or (as the word properly ſignifies) his age? Who can declare his ſtate, the eſtabliſhment and duration of his dignity, influence, and government? For though he was cut off, made an exciſion and a curſe, from amongſt men, it was not upon his own account, but for the tranſgreſſion of my people, that he was ſmitten.

God was manifeſted in the fleſh *, and in the fleſh he ſuffered as a malefactor. Undoubtedly the divine

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

vine nature is incapable of ſuffering; but the human nature, which did ſuffer, was aſſumed by him *who is over all, God, bleſſed for ever* *. But he was juſtified in the Spirit; and ſufficient care was taken, that in his loweſt humiliation, though he was condemned and reviled, his character ſhould be vindicated. I ſhall, therefore, conſider at preſent the teſtimonies given to his innocence. Though he was cut off out of the land of the living, it was only as a ſubſtitute for others. He was ſtricken for the tranſgreſſion of his people.

1. The firſt atteſtation, and, which of itſelf is fully ſufficient to eſtabliſh this point, is that of *Judas*. He was one of the twelve apoſtles who attended our Lord's perſon, and who were admitted to a nearer and more frequent intercourſe with him than the reſt of his diſciples. Though our Lord knew that his heart was corrupt, and that he would prove a traitor, he does not appear to have treated him with peculiar reſerve, or to have kept him more at a diſtance than the other apoſtles; for when he told them, *One of you ſhall betray me*, they had no particular ſuſpicion of Judas. He, therefore, was well acquainted with the more retired hours of his Maſter's life. He had been often with him in Gethſemane, before he went thither to betray him to his enemies. When he had acted this treacherous part, if he, who had been frequently preſent when Jeſus converſed moſt freely in private with his ſelect followers, had known any thing amiſs in his conduct, we may be ſure he would gladly have diſcloſed it, for his own juſtification. Chriſtian ſocieties have uſually been reviled and ſlandered by thoſe who have apoſtatized from them; their miſtakes, if they were juſtly chargeable with any, have been eagerly publiſhed and exaggerated; and many things often laid to their charge which they knew not. But Judas, on the contrary, was compelled by his

* Rom. ix. 5.

his conſcience to return his ill-gotten gain to the chief prieſts and elders, and to confeſs, *I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood* *. Conſidering the time of making this declaration, when he ſaw that he was already condemned, and the perſons to whom he made it, even to thoſe who had condemned him, it cannot be denied that he was an unſuſpected and competent witneſs to his innocence. And the anſwer of the chief prieſts implied, that, though their malice could be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the death of this innocent perſon, they were unable to contradict the traitor's teſtimony.

2. Though *Pilate* likewiſe condemned MESSIAH to death, to gratify the importunity of the Jews, he repeatedly declared his firm perſuaſion of his innocence; and he did it with great ſolemnity. *He took water, and waſhed his hands*, publicly, *before the multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the blood of this juſt perſon* †. He laboured for his releaſe, though the fear of man prevailed upon him at laſt, as it has upon many, to act in defiance to the light and conviction of his conſcience. And from him we learn, that Herod ‡, notwithſtanding he mocked him and ſet him at nought, conſidered the accuſations of his enemies to be entirely groundleſs. And farther, when the Jews propoſed ſuch an alteration of the title affixed to his croſs, as might imply, that the claims our Lord had made were unjuſt and criminal, Pilate utterly refuſed to comply with their demand.

3. *The thief upon the croſs*, with his dying breath, ſaid, *This man hath done nothing amiſs*. If his competency as a witneſs ſhould be diſputed, becauſe it is probable he had known but little of him, I admit the objection. Be it ſo, that this malefactor had little perſonal knowledge of our Lord. Then, his opinion of his innocence muſt have been founded upon public report; and, therefore, it ſeems, he ſpoke not for himſelf

* Matt. xxvii. 4. † Matt. xxvii. 24. ‡ Luke xxiii. 15.

himſelf only; but his words may be taken as a proof, that the people at large, though they ſuffered themſelves to be influenced by the chief prieſts, to demand his death, and to prefer Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, to him, were generally conſcious that he had done nothing amiſs. Many of thoſe who now ſaid, *Crucify him, crucify him*, had, not long before, welcomed him with acclamations of praiſe, ſaying, *Hoſannah to the Son of David*. This inconſiſtence and inconſtancy is not altogether ſurpriſing to thoſe who are well acquainted with the weakneſs and wickedneſs of human nature in its preſent ſtate; and who conſider the effects which the miſrepreſentations and artifice of perſons of great name, and in high office, have often produced in the minds of the ignorant and ſuperſtitious. Thus, at Lyſtra, through the perſuaſion of the Jews, the Apoſtle Paul was ſtoned and left for dead *, by the very people, who, a little before, could with difficulty be reſtrained from paying him divine honours.

4. Though the ſalvation of men, and the honour of the law of God, required, that when MESSIAH undertook to make an atonement for our ſins, he ſhould be thus given up to the rage and cruelty of his enemies, ſuffer all the infamy due to the worſt and vileſt tranſgreſſors, and be deſerted by God and man; yet his *heavenly Father* bore a ſignal and ſolemn teſtimony to his character. The frame of nature ſympathiſed with her ſuffering Lord. The heavens were clothed with ſackcloth; the ſun withdrew his ſhining; the ſanctuary was laid open, by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom; the earth trembled greatly; the rocks were rent; the graves opened; and the dead aroſe. Theſe events, in connection with what had paſſed before, extorted an acknowledgment of his innocence from the Roman

* Acts xiv. 12, 19.

Roman centurion who was appointed to attend his execution.

Thus, it appears, that Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewiſh council, which could not find ſufficient ground, even though they employed falſe and ſuborned witneſſes to paſs ſentence upon him; Herod, who derided him; Pilate, who condemned him; the malefactor, who ſuffered with him; and the commander of the ſoldiers who crucified him, all combined in a declaration of his innocence: God himſelf confirming their word, by ſigns and wonders in heaven and upon earth.

It may ſeem quite unneceſſary to prove the innocency of him, who, in his human nature, was abſolutely perfect, and in whom the preſence and fulneſs of God dwelt; and it *is* indeed unneceſſary to thoſe who believe in his name. It is, however, a pleaſing contemplation to them, and has an important influence upon their faith and hope. In this they triumph, *that he who knew no ſin himſelf, was made ſin*, was treated as a ſinner for them, *that they might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him. The High Prieſt of our profeſſion needed not*, as thoſe who typified his office of old, *to offer up ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the ſins of the people*; for he was perfectly holy, harmleſs, and undefiled. And had he not been a lamb without ſpot or blemiſh, he could not have been accepted on our behalf. It was the perfection of his voluntary obedience to the law of our nature, under which he ſubmitted to be made, which, conjoined with the excellency of his character as the Son of God, made him meet, able, and worthy, to expiate our tranſgreſſions. By the *one offering*—of himſelf, once offered, *he has made an end of ſin, brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs, and having appeared with his own blood within the vail, in the preſence of God for us, and ever living to make interceſſion for*

for all who come unto God by him, he is propoſed in the goſpel as *the Author of eternal ſalvation to all who obey him. In him, all the ſeed of Iſrael ſhall be juſtified, and ſhall glory* *. In him the true Iſrael, the partakers of the faith of Abraham, ſhall be ſaved, *ſaved* to the uttermoſt, *ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation; they ſhall not be aſhamed, nor confounded, world without end.*

But who that knows theſe things can ſufficiently commiſerate the fatal effects of that unbelief which blinds and hardens the hearts of multitudes! eſpecially that more learned and informed, and therefore more inexcuſable unbelief, which characteriſes the modern patrons of ſcepticiſm. They read and admire ancient hiſtory. There is no old ſtory ſo frivolous or improbable, but it is ſufficient to engage their attention, and to exerciſe their acumen, if it be found in Herodotus or Livy. They ſpare no pains, they perplex themſelves, and weary their readers, with their attempts to decypher an ancient inſcription, or to fix the date, or reconcile the circumſtances of a ſuppoſed event, which, after all, perhaps never had place but in the imagination of the writer. Their implicit deference to ſuch uncertain authorities as theſe, often verges upon the border of extreme credulity. The Bible is an ancient hiſtory likewiſe; and if it was only received upon the footing of the reſt, as merely a human compoſition, the facts which it relates, and the manner in which they are related, the admirable ſimplicity of narration in ſome parts, the unrivalled ſublimity of deſcription in others; the juſtneſs and diſcrimination of characters; the views it unfolds, of the workings of the human heart, and the ſprings of action, ſo exactly conformable to experience and obſervation, might ſurely recommend it to their notice. And poſſibly, if it *did* claim no higher

* Iſ. xlv. 17, 25.

higher authority than a human compoſition, men who have any juſt pretenſions to taſte would admire it no leſs than they now undervalue it. But becauſe it does not flatter their pride, nor give indulgence to their corrupt propenſities, they are afraid to ſtudy it, leſt the internal marks of its divine original ſhould force unwelcome convictions upon their minds. Therefore they remain willingly ignorant of its contents, or the knowledge they diſcover of it is ſo very ſuperficial, that a well inſtructed child of ten years of age may ſmile at the miſtakes of critics and philoſophers. That ſuch a book is extant, is undeniable. How can they account for its production? A view of what they actually have done, will warrant us to aſſert, that the wiſeſt men of antiquity, neither would have written ſuch a book if they could, nor were they able, had they been ever ſo willing. And yet we have as good evidence, that the New Teſtament was written by plain and unlearned men, as we have for any fact recorded in hiſtory. How could ſuch men invent ſuch a book? And how ſhould they, without ſeeming directly to deſign it, but incidentally as it were, repreſent, that perſons of ſuch various characters, who concurred in putting Jeſus to death, ſhould all equally concur in eſtabliſhing the teſtimony of his innocence.

True Chriſtians, when they ſuffer unjuſtly, may learn, from the example of their Lord, to ſuffer patiently. The apoſtle preſſes this argument upon ſervants *—who in thoſe days were chiefly bond-ſervants, or ſlaves. He, therefore, evidently ſuppoſes, that the knowledge of the goſpel was ſufficient to qualify people, in the loweſt ſituations of human life, with a fortitude and magnanimity of ſpirit of which philoſophy could ſcarcely reach the conception. In effect, to be much taken up with the intereſts of ſelf, to

* 1 Pet. ii. 18,—20.

to live upon the breath of others, to be full of reſentment for every injury, and watchful to retaliate it; theſe are the properties and tokens of a little and narrow mind. It requires no energy, no ſacrifice, no reſolution, to acquire ſuch a diſpoſition; for it is natural to us, and powerful and habitual in the weakeſt and leaſt reſpectable characters. But to act uniformly as the ſervants of God, ſatisfied with his approbation, under the regulation of his will, and for his ſake cheerfully to bear whatever hardſhips a compliance with duty may expoſe us to, enduring grief, ſuffering wrongfully, and acting in the ſpirit of benevolence and meekneſs, not only to the good, but alſo to the froward; this indicates a true nobleneſs of ſoul. And to this we are called by our profeſſion; for thus Chriſt ſuffered. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet he was reviled, but he reviled not again. He ſuffered, though innocent; but he threatened not. He was crucified by wicked men; but he prayed for them while they were nailing him to the croſs. This was an eminent branch of the mind that was in Chriſt; and it ought to be a diſtinguiſhing feature in the character of his people. For, is the diſciple above his Lord? or ſhould the conduct of the diſciple contradict that of his Lord? Undoubtedly, ſo far as we are partakers in the doctrine of his ſufferings, and have real fellowſhip with him in his death, we ſhall reſemble him. *If we ſay we abide in him, we ought to walk, even as he walked* *. But they, who, calling themſelves Chriſtians, are full of the ſpirit of ſelf-juſtification, contention, and complaint, while they profeſs to believe in him, deny him by their works. The apoſtles Peter and John, deeply affected by their obligations to him, and by the exquiſite pattern of meekneſs and tenderneſs which he had ſet before them, departed from

* 1 John ii. 6.

from the preſence of the council, not ſwelling with anger, nor hanging down their heads with grief, but *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his ſake* *. And he deſerves no leſs from us than he did from them. It was for us, no leſs than for them, that he endured reproach, and was content to die as a malefactor, though he was innocent.

* Acts v. 41.

SERMON XXV.

Meſſiah riſing from the Dead.

PSALM xvi. 10.

For thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell: neither wilt thou ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corruption.

THAT the goſpel is a divine revelation, may be ſummarily proved from the character of its Author. If an infidel was ſo far diveſted of prejudice and prepoſſeſſion, as to read the hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt recorded by the evangeliſts, with attention, and in order to form his judgment of it, ſimply and candidly, as evidence ſhould appear; I think he muſt obſerve many particulars in his ſpirit and conduct, ſo very different from the prevailing ſentiments of mankind, as to convince him, that man, in his preſent ſtate, could not poſſibly have conceived the idea of ſuch a character. Poets and hiſtorians have often employed their powers in delineating what appeared to them the great and the excellent in human conduct. But how different are the pictures of their admired heroes, ſages, and legiſlators, from the portrait of the Saviour, as it is drawn with the utmoſt ſimplicity by plain unlettered men, who, without art or affectation, only deſcribe what they profeſs to have ſeen and heard. I fix at preſent upon a ſingle conſideration, which perhaps cannot be expreſſed more properly or forcibly, than in the words of an ingenious writer now living. "He is the only founder of a religion, in the hiſtory of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally unconducive to any worldly

worldly purpoſe whatever. All others, Mahomet, Numa, and even Moſes himſelf, blended their religious inſtitutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their reſpective people. But Chriſt neither aimed at, nor would accept of any ſuch power. He rejected * every object which all other men purſue, and made choice of thoſe which others fly from and are afraid of. He refuſed power, riches, honours, and pleaſure; and courted poverty, ignominy, tortures, and death. Many have been the enthuſiaſts and impoſtors, who have endeavoured to impoſe on the world pretended revelations; and ſome of them, from pride, obſtinacy, or principle, have gone ſo far as to lay down their lives rather than retract: but I defy hiſtory to ſhew one, who ever made his own ſufferings and death † a neceſſary part of his original plan, and eſſential to his miſſion. This Chriſt actually did; he foreſaw, foretold, declared their neceſſity, and voluntarily endured them ‡."

The death of our Lord was indeed eſſential to his plan; as ſuch, it was conſtantly in his view, and he often ſpoke of it. Probably it was the *whole* of his enemies plan; and when they ſaw him dead, buried, and the ſepulchre ſealed, they triumphed in their ſucceſs, and expected to hear of him no more. But the ſcriptures, which were read in their ſynagogues every ſabbath-day, foretold his reſurrection from the dead. The text before us, if there were no other, is a ſufficient proof of this, to thoſe who acknowledge the authority of the New Teſtament, ſince it is expreſsly applied to him by the apoſtles Peter and Paul.

The word in the Hebrew text rendered in our verſion, *Soul*, is uſed in different ſenſes. According to the connection in which it ſtands, it ſignifies breath, life, ſoul, or ſpirit, and ſometimes the dead body.

* John xviii. 36. † John xii. 24, 32, 33.
‡ Jenyn's Internal Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 33, 34, Edit. 3.

The correſponding Greek word, where the apoſtle quotes this verſe *, has likewiſe various ſignifications. And the original words anſwering to *Hell*, ſignify both the inviſible world, or the ſtate of the dead, and ſometimes the grave. Notwithſtanding this ſeeming diverſity, we are at no loſs here for the preciſe ſenſe. Scripture is the beſt interpreter of itſelf. It is evidently the apoſtle's deſign to prove that the Pſalmiſt foreſaw, and foretold, the reſurrection of that body which was taken down dead from the croſs, and laid in Joſeph's tomb. With this body our Lord aroſe on the third day, according to the ſcriptures.

Though MESSIAH was, for our ſakes, treated as a malefactor, all who were immediately concerned in his death were conſtrained (as we have ſeen) to declare his innocence. But he was worthy of a more ſolemn and authoritative juſtification. Accordingly, *He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his reſurrection from the dead* †.

The apoſtle expounds *thine Holy One* by the word *Fleſh* ‡. The human nature, the body formed by the immediate power of God, and born of a virgin, was holy.—It was, *A holy thing* ‖. Perfect and pure, and therefore naturally not mortal, though ſubject to death for us. In this nature the Son of God was charged with ſins not his own; he became willingly reſponſible for many §. Whatever was neceſſary on the behalf of ſinners, to render their forgiveneſs conſiſtent with the honour of the law, juſtice, truth, and government of God, was exacted of him, and he performed, and paid to the utmoſt. He made a full atonement for ſin; and though he had power over his life, he hung hour after hour in agonies upon the croſs, till he ſaid, *It is finiſhed.* Then he reſigned his ſpirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. He was afterwards buried. But having finiſhed his whole undertaking,

* Acts ii. 27. † Rom. i. 4. ‡ Acts ii. 29.
‖ Luke i. 35. § Matth. xx. 28.

undertaking, deſtroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven, in favour of all who ſhould believe in him, *it was not poſſible that he ſhould be detained in the grave* *. He had power likewiſe to reſume the life he had laid down for his ſheep; and he aroſe the third day, to exerciſe all power and authority in heaven and in earth.

His reſurrection therefore is the grand principal fact upon which the truth and importance of Chriſtianity reſts. For though Chriſt died, if he had not riſen again, *your faith and our preaching would be in vain.* We ſhould be *yet in our ſins* †. And though it was not neceſſary that his reſurrection ſhould have been ſo publicly known, at the time, as his crucifixion, the evidence for it is ſtrong and deciſive. No one point of ancient hiſtory is capable of ſuch clear accumulated proof. The apoſtles frequently ſaw him, converſed with him, eat and drank with him, and were aſſured that it was he by many infallible proofs. They could not be deceived themſelves, nor could they have any temptation to deceive others. They declared his reſurrection to the very people who put him to death; and they confirmed it by many indiſputable miracles, which they performed in his name. They perſevered in this teſtimony, in defiance of the malice of the Jews and the ſcorn of the heathens. And by this doctrine of a crucified riſen Saviour, though unſupported by the patronage of human power, yea, though oppoſed by it in every place, they effected that change in the moral world, whereever they went, which the philoſophers had not been able to produce, by all their inſtructions, in a ſingle inſtance; turning men, whom they found under the ſtrongeſt prejudices of education and habit, *from darkneſs to light, and from the worſhip of dumb idols, to ſerve the living and the true God* ‡.

* Acts ii. 24. † 1 Cor. xv. 17. ‡ 1 Theſſ. i. 9.

But there are proofs of this point which depend not upon arguments or hiſtory, which require neither learning, genius, nor ſtudy to comprehend; but are equally adapted to perſons of all capacities, and in all circumſtances. Theſe are the effects which this doctrine produces on the hearts of thoſe who truly receive it upon the authority of ſcripture, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whoſe office it is to open the eyes of the mind, to take of the things of Jeſus, (what the ſcripture reveals of his perſon, offices, and glory), and to preſent them, with infallible light and evidence, to thoſe who humbly yield themſelves to his teaching. Theſe are made partakers *of the power of his reſurrection* *. It delivers them from guilt and fear, animates them with confidence towards God, weans them from the love and ſpirit of this evil world, inſpires them with great and glorious hopes, and delivers them from the fear of death. They *are riſen with Chriſt*, by faith, *and ſeek the things which are above* †, where they know their Lord and Saviour is ſeated in glory.

I do but touch upon theſe particulars at preſent, becauſe the ſubject will come under our conſideration again; from a ſubſequent paſſage in the Oratorio. Yet I would not wholly omit leading your reflections to them, though what I briefly offer now, may make what I ſhall then offer (if my life is prolonged to proceed ſo far) appear under the diſadvantage of a repetition of the ſame thoughts. Indeed, I know not how to place the proof of this capital doctrine in a light entirely new. The moſt ſatisfactory proofs are the moſt obvious; and it would be folly to ſubſtitute weaker in their place for the ſake of novelty. But if *I ſhould* live to reſume the ſubject, *ſome of you* who are now preſent may not live to hear me. So far as concerns the fact, I may hope that the moſt, or all of you, are believers, and that you are already perſuaded

* Phil. iii. 10. † Col. iii. 1.

perſuaded in your minds that *the Lord is riſen indeed*!* I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to profeſſed Chriſtians. But permit me to aſk, What influence this truth has upon your hopes, your tempers, and your conduct? The powers of darkneſs know that Chriſt is riſen. They believe, they feel, they tremble. I hope none of you will be content with ſuch a faith as may be found in the fallen angels. As ſurely as he is riſen, he will at length return to judge the world. *Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him!* They who are prepared to meet him, who are waiting for him, and who long for his appearance, have reaſon to rejoice that he once died, and roſe again!

Many are the advantages which true Chriſtians derive from a ſpiritual and enlightened knowledge of this doctrine. I will mention a few.

1. As MESSIAH was *delivered*, that is delivered up, as a hoſtage to the demands of juſtice *for our offences*; ſo they know that *he was raiſed again for our juſtification*†. By virtue of that union which ſubſiſts between MESSIAH, as the Head of his body the church, and all his members; that is, all in the ſucceſſive ages of the world, who believe in him by a faith of divine operation; he is their legal repreſentative; he and they are conſidered as one. His ſufferings, his whole humiliation and obedience unto death, is ſo imputed to them, that they thereby are exempted from condemnation; and though not from all ſufferings, yet from all that is properly penal, or ſtrictly a puniſhment. What they ſuffer is only in a way of diſcipline or chaſtiſement; and to them a token, not of wrath, but of love. On the other hand, as he by his reſurrection was vindicated, juſtified from the reproaches of his enemies, declared to be the Son of God, with power, and raiſed to glory; they have fellowſhip with him herein. God exalted him to glory,

* Luke xxiv. 34. † Rom. v. 25.

glory, *and gave him a name above every name*, that *their faith and hope might be in God* *. They are not only pardoned, but accepted in the Beloved. And after this ſtate of diſcipline is ended, they ſhall be treated as if they had never ſinned. For if their ſins are ſought for in that day, they ſhall not be found. If any charge ſhould be brought againſt them, it ſhall be over-ruled—by this comprehenſive unanſwerable plea—*Chriſt that died, yea, rather that is riſen again, appears in the preſence of God*, acknowledges them as his own, and *makes interceſſion for them* †. Among men, a criminal may obtain a pardon, may eſcape the ſentence he has deſerved, and yet be left in a deſtitute and miſerable condition. But juſtification is God's manner of pardoning ſinners, according to the ſovereignty and riches of his grace, in the Son of his love. Thoſe whom he pardons, he alſo juſtifies; and whom he juſtifies, he alſo glorifies. And even now in this life, though it doth not yet appear what they ſhall be, though their preſent privileges are far ſhort of what they hope for, *and though eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them* ‡; yet even now are they *the children of God* ‖.—And in the midſt of their trials and infirmities, though conſcious of much defect, and many defilements, in their beſt hours and ſervices; and though they have not forgotten their iniquities and provocations, when they lived without God in the world; yet, according to the meaſure of their faith, exerciſed upon their Saviour, who was raiſed for their juſtification, they can rejoice in the knowledge of their acceptance, and rely upon him for their perſeverance; and they dare approach the great, holy, and heart-ſearching God, as to a Father, and pour out their hearts before him, with greater freedom than they can uſe to their deareſt

* 1 Pet. i. 21. † Rom. viii. 33, 34. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.
‖ 1 John iii. 2.

deareſt earthly friends. And while they feel and confeſs themſelves unworthy of the ſmalleſt of his mercies, they are not afraid to aſk for the greateſt bleſſings his bounty can beſtow, even to be ſet as a ſeal upon his heart, and upon his arm, to be filled with all his communicable fulneſs, and to claim him as their everlaſting portion.

2. The reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, is a pledge and ſpecimen of that almighty power which is engaged on their behalf, to overcome all the obſtacles, difficulties, and enemies, they are liable to meet with in their pilgrimage, which threaten to diſappoint their hopes, and to prevent them from obtaining their heavenly inheritance. The firſt communication of a principle of faith and ſpiritual life to their hearts, whereby they are delivered from the dominion of ſin, and from the ſpirit and love of the world, is attributed to *the exceeding greatneſs of that mighty power* which raiſed the dead body * of their Lord from the grave, and ſet him at his own right hand, *far above all principality and might, and every name that is named.* And often the church, collectively, in its militant ſtate, and the individuals which compoſe it, in their perſonal concerns, have been brought, to outward appearance, exceeding low. Their enemies have ſeemed upon the point of triumphing, and ſaying, Down with them, even to the ground. Such was the boaſt of the Jewiſh rulers, when they had ſlain the Shepherd and diſperſed his flock. But it was a ſhort-lived boaſt. He aroſe, he aſcended, he took poſſeſſion of his kingdom for himſelf, and for them. He poured out his Holy Spirit upon them, and they went forth preaching his word, which ſpread like the light of advancing day, from Judea to Samaria, and to the diſtant parts of the earth. The united force of the powers of hell and earth endeavoured to ſuppreſs it, but in vain. Many nations and

* Eph. i. 19,—21.

and kingdoms laboured to extirpate the very name of Chriſtianity from among men, but they ſucceſſively periſhed in the attempt; and the cauſe againſt which they raged is ſtill preſerved. *It is founded upon a rock; and the gates of hell cannot prevail againſt it* *. Nor can any weapon proſper that is formed againſt the weakeſt and meaneſt of thoſe who ſincerely eſpouſe this cauſe. He, to whom they have devoted and entruſted themſelves, has promiſed, *that none ſhall pluck them out of his hands* †. And while he remains faithful to his word, and able to fulfil it, they ſhall be ſafe. Yet they are often preſſed above meaſure, beyond ſtrength, inſomuch that they, perhaps, deſpair even of life. But when they are at the loweſt, the Lord is their helper; and they are taught by the exigencies they paſs through, to truſt, not in themſelves, *but in God who raiſed the dead* ‡. It is, indeed, the Lord's uſual method of training up his people to an habitual dependence upon himſelf. When he has raiſed their expectations by his promiſes, he permits, as it were, a temporary death to overcloud their proſpect; and that which he has ſaid he will ſurely do for them, appears for a ſeaſon, to the judgment of ſenſe, impracticable and hopeleſs. We might illuſtrate this point at large from the hiſtory of Abraham, of Iſrael in Egypt, of David, and of the rebuilding of the ſecond temple; and I doubt not but it might be illuſtrated from the hiſtory of many in this aſſembly. If you have been walking with God for any conſiderable time, you have met with turns and changes which have almoſt put you to a ſtand. You have been, and perhaps now are, in ſuch circumſtances, that you feel you have no reſource in yourſelf, and you are ſure, that the help of man cannot relieve you; *but while your help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth* ‖, and while

* Matt. xvi. 18. † John x. 28. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 9.
‖ Pſal cxxiv. 8.

while you are warranted to truſt in him, *who raiſeth the dead*, you have no juſt reaſon to deſpond. It was a dark ſeaſon with the diſciples, when their Lord, whom they loved, *and in whom they truſted, that it had been he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael* *, was condemned, and put to death. But the appointed third day relieved their fears, and turned their mourning into joy.

3. His reſurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. As certainly as Chriſt, the firſt-fruits, is riſen, ſo certainly ſhall they that are Chriſt's ariſe at his coming. And each of his people ſhall ariſe, *aliuſque & idem* †. Their bodies, though properly their own, ſhall be changed, *and faſhioned like unto his glorious body* ‡. This corruptible muſt put on incorruption; and the body, which is ſown in diſhonour and weakneſs, be raiſed in power and glory. Fleſh and blood, in its preſent ſtate, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The body, in this life, is a clog and a burden to thoſe who place their chief happineſs in the ſervice of God, and in communion with him. It is a vile body, defiled by ſin, and it defiles their beſt deſires and nobleſt efforts. Even the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which they live, though perfectly pure in itſelf, is debaſed, when communicated to *them*, and exerciſed under the diſadvantages of a ſinful nature, as the beſt wine will receive a taint if poured into a foul veſſel. The body, in another view, is a priſon, in which the ſoul, confined and pent up, is limited in its operations, and impeded in its perceptions of divine things. Though we are probably ſurrounded by the glorious realities of the ſpiritual world, only ſhort and tranſient glances of them are diſcoverable by us; we ſee but by reflection, and darkly ‖; we know but in part, and ſhould know nothing of them, but for the good report of the word of God. Farther, the

* Luke xxiv. 20, 21.
† Another and yet the ſame.
‡ Phil. iii. 21.
‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

the body, as it is the ſeat of innumerable infirmities, and the medium which connects us with the calamities incident to this mortal ſtate, is often a great hindrance to our moſt deſirable enjoyments. Pain and ſickneſs call off the attention, and indiſpoſe our faculties, when we wiſh to be moſt engaged in prayer, detain us from the ordinances, or prevent the pleaſure we hope for in waiting upon the Lord in them. But our new, ſpiritual, and glorified bodies, will be free from all defilement or defect. They will be completely qualified to anſwer the beſt wiſhes, and moſt enlarged activity, of the ſoul. Then, but not till then, we hope to be all eye, all ear, always upon the wing in his ſervice, and perfectly conformed to his image, in light, holineſs, and love; for then we *ſhall ſee him as he is*, without any interpoſing veil or cloud *.

* 1 John iii. 2.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

THE

WORKS

OF THE

LATE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

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OF

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,

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MESSIAH.

HIS

EXALTATION, KINGDOM,

AND

SECOND ADVENT.

VOL. II.

Carmina, tum melius, cum venerit IPSE, *canemus.*

VIRG.

To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

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Rev. v. 13.

[*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying,*] *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* 260

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SERMON XXVI.

The Aſcenſion of Meſſiah to Glory.

PSALM xxiv. 7,—10.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors, and the King of glory ſhall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord ſtrong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift up, ye everlaſting doors, and the King of glory ſhall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hoſts, he is the King of glory.

THE inſtitutions of the Levitical law were a ſhadow or ſketch of good things to come. They exhibited a faint and general outline of the mediation and glory of MESSIAH. They may be compared to the delicate engravings on a ſeal, the beauty and proportions of which cannot be plainly diſcerned without the aſſiſtance of a glaſs. The goſpel anſwers to ſuch a glaſs. Beheld through this medium, the miniature delineations of the law, which to the eye of unaſſiſted, unhumbled reaſon appear confuſed and inſignificant, diſplay a preciſion of arrangement in the parts, and an importance of deſign in the whole, worthy the wiſdom of their great Author.

From the ſimilarity of the ſubject of this Pſalm and the ſixty-eighth, it is at leaſt probable that they were both compoſed upon the ſame occaſion, the removal of the ark of the Lord, from its laſt ſtationary reſidence, to its fixed abode in Zion; when the king, the prieſts, the ſingers, and the harpers, all

aſſiſted in the proceſſion, attended by a great concourſe of the people. The language of the latter part of the Pſalm is evidently alternate. And we may conceive, that when the ark approached the tabernacle, the prieſts and Levites who accompanied it, demanded admittance for it in theſe words, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, &c.* and were anſwered by thoſe who were waiting within to receive it, *Who is the King of glory?* To which queſtion the proper reply is made, *The Lord of Hoſts, he is the King of glory.*

This, if taken according to the letter of the hiſtory, was a grand and ſolemn tranſaction. But it was at the ſame time a type of an event unſpeakably more glorious. They who know that the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament teſtify of Chriſt, that it is he of whom Moſes in the Law, David in the Pſalms, and all the ſucceeding prophets, did write, will, I think, agree in conſidering this paſſage as referring to his aſcenſion, in the nature in which he ſuffered, into the true holy place in the heavens, as the repreſentative and high prieſt of his people; when, after having by his own ſelf purged our ſins, he ſat down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high. Then having ſpoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, though not in the view of mortal eyes. He lifted up his hands, and bleſſed his apoſtles, and while in this attitude he was parted from them *. He aſcended gently and gradually, and they, admiring and adoring, beheld him with fixed attention, till a cloud concealed him from their ſight †. The pomp and triumph of his aſcenſion were diſplayed in the inviſible world. But this deſcription, accommodated to our apprehenſions, is given to aſſiſt the faith of his people; that their hearts may be comforted, their meditations enlarged, and that in the exerciſe of grateful love, they may follow

* Luke xxiv. 51. † Acts i. 9.

low him in their thoughts, aſcend with him into the heavenly places, and rejoice in his glory.

We conceive of him, therefore, from this ſublime paſſage, as aſcending to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; accompanied with a train of worſhipping angels, who demand admittance for MESSIAH, the Saviour and friend of ſinners, as the King of glory. The queſtion is aſked, Who is he that claims this honour? An anſwer is given, aſſerting his character, his victories, and the juſtice of his claims—*The Lord of hoſts, the Lord ſtrong in battle, he is the King of glory.*

The principal points which offer to our conſideration, are,

I. His title, *The Lord of hoſts.*

II. His victories, implied in the expreſſion, *The Lord ſtrong and mighty in battle.*

III. His mediatorial title, *the King of glory.*

IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.

I. MESSIAH, who humbled himſelf to the death of the croſs, is *the Lord of hoſts.* He is ſo, if the ſcripture be true: I attempt no other proof. This is a point not referred to the diſcuſſion of our fallen reaſon, but propoſed by the authority of God in his word, as the foundation of our faith and hope. He is the huſband of the church, and the huſband of the church is the Lord of hoſts *. It was the Lord of hoſts whom Iſaiah ſaw, ſeated upon a throne, his train filling the temple †. The viſion filled him with aſtoniſhment, and he cried out, *Woe is me, I am undone; for mine eyes have ſeen the Lord of hoſts.* But the Apoſtle John aſſures us, that when Iſaiah ſaid theſe things, he ſaw *his* glory and ſpake of *him* ‡. This is the title of God in the Old Teſtament; or, as ſome chuſe to ſpeak, of the Supreme Being. And it is aſcribed to MESSIAH in many places. Therefore, if he were not the Lord of hoſts, the ſcripture

* If. liv. 5. † Ibid. lxi. 3. ‡ John xii. 41.

would be chargeable with authoriſing, yea with enjoining idolatry. But he is *the true God, and eternal life* *; and they who give him the honour due to his name, have every thing to hope, and nothing to fear.

II. *He is the Lord, ſtrong and mighty in battle.* It was in his human nature he engaged in battle with his enemies and ours. But the battle was the Lord's. Therefore, though he *trod the wine-preſs alone, and of the people there was none with him* †, his own arm brought him ſalvation. He is conqueror of ſin, Satan, and death. We were under the power of theſe; therefore, for our ſakes, he engaged in conflict with their united force. He fought, he bled, he died; but in dying, he conquered. The ſtrength of ſin is the law; this ſtrength he ſubdued, by obeying the precepts of the law, and ſuſtaining the penalty due to our tranſgreſſions. He deſtroyed death, and diſarmed it of its ſting. He deſtroyed him that hath the power of death, Satan. He ſhook, he overturned the foundations of his kingdom, broke open his priſon-doors, releaſed his priſoners, delivered the prey out of the hand of the mighty, *and having ſpoiled principalities and powers, he made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in it* ‡, that is, his croſs. The Apoſtle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of ſtate, attended by his officers and ſoldiers; the principal priſoners followed in chains, and all the treaſures and trophies gained from the vanquiſhed enemy were diſplayed to adorn the proceſſion. Thus MESSIAH ſubdued the ſtrength and policy of the powers of darkneſs, in the hour of his loweſt humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the croſs, and triumphed over them, glorioufly leading captivity captive, when he aſcended on high ‖. Satan, though ſtill an enemy to his church and cauſe, is

* 1 John v. 20. † Iſ. lxiii. 3. ‡ Col. ii. 15. ‖ Pſ. lxviii. 18.

is deſpoiled of his dominion; his power is only permiſſive, and in his fierceſt aſſaults he is limited by bounds which he cannot paſs, by a chain which he cannot break. And all his attempts are controuled and over-ruled, to the furtherance of the cauſe which he would ſuppreſs, and to the good of the perſons whom he would worry and deſtroy. They are made acquainted with his devices, furniſhed with armour ſufficient to repel him; and they fight under encouragement of a ſure promiſe, that the God of peace will ſhortly and finally bruiſe Satan under their feet. As MESSIAH their King has conquered for them, ſo they, in due time, ſhall be made more than conquerors, by faith in his blood, and in the word of his teſtimony.

III. The title of *King of glory*, I underſtand as peculiarly applicable to him in the character of Mediator. The glory of his divine nature is eſſential to him. But in conſequence of his obedience unto death, he obtained, in the human nature, *a name that is above every name* *. He ſuffered as a man, yea, as a malefactor; there was no appearance of glory in that form of a ſervant which he aſſumed for our ſakes. Though without ſin, he was made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, ſubject to poverty, diſgrace, and death; but the ſame man who was crucified, dead, and buried, received glory and authority at his reſurrection, and was highly exalted to the adminiſtration of all dominion and government. Perhaps the word *glory* is not eaſily defined. We conceive it as expreſſing brightneſs and ſplendour. The glory of Solomon was the combined effect of his wiſdom, power, and riches; which diſtinguiſhed him in his character, conduct, and appearance, from other men. The glory of the ſun, is his effulgence and influence. The word *glory*, when applied to the bleſſed God, ſeems to denote that manifeſtation of

* Phil. ii. 9.

of himſelf, by which his intelligent creatures are capable of knowing him; for in himſelf he is infinite, inacceſſible, and incomprehenſible; and dwelleth in that light which no man, which no creature, can approach unto *. Of this manifeſtation there are various degrees. His glory ſhines in the creation. Not only do the heavens declare it by their immenſity †, and furniſh us with an idea of his unſpeakable greatneſs, who has ſent forth ten thouſand worlds, to tell us that he reſides above them all; but the ſmalleſt of his works, the graſs and flowers of the field, and the inſects which creep upon the ground ‡, bear an impreſſion of his wiſdom and goodneſs, an inimitable criterion of his wonder-working hand, which ſo far diſplays his glory. To an attentive and diſcerning mind, his glory ſhines in his providence; in his preſerving the world which he has made; in ſupplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, beſides his wiſdom, power, and general goodneſs, we diſcover ſome traces of his character as the righteous Judge of the earth. But to our limited capacities and views this glory is obſcured by many difficulties. Though *righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet clouds and darkneſs are round about him* ‖. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured with a ſtill brighter diſplay of his glory, in the perfections of holineſs, juſtice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to diſcover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is *the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* §. No one hath ſeen God at any time, but the only-begotten *Son, who is in the boſom of the Father* ¶, intimately acquainted with his counſels, *he hath declared him.* This was the great deſign of his advent, to

* 1 Tim. vi. 16. † Pſ. xix. 1. ‡ Pſ. civ. 24. 25.
‖ Pſ. xcvii. 2. § Heb. i. 3. ¶ John i. 18.

to make God known to man: for as it is life eternal to know the only true God; ſo he is only to be known in and by Jeſus Chriſt, whom he hath ſent *, and who is the way and the door, and there is no entrance to the knowledge of God but by him. In the perſon and work of MESSIAH, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the brightneſs and harmony of all his attributes, is tranſcendently revealed. In this ſenſe, he is the Lord, the King of glory. When we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of him according to the teſtimony given of him in the ſcripture, we ſee the glory of God. Other diſcoveries of it are but ſcattered rays and emanations of light; but in Jeſus the glory of God reſides in its ſource and fulneſs, as light in the ſun. He is therefore the King of glory.

IV. As the acknowledged King of glory, in the nature of man, he aſcended; the everlaſting gates unfolded wide, and he entered into the holy place, not made with hands, there to appear in the preſence of God for his people.

1. As their Repreſentative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom; but he claimed and took poſſeſſion in their name †. Hence he is ſtyled their forerunner, becauſe by virtue of their relation to him, and their intereſt in him, they ſhall ſurely follow him. This is the encouragement of believers. He is the head of his body the church: and though the church, while in this world, is in a ſuffering perilous ſtate; yet as the body of a man is not in danger of drowning while his head is out of the water, ſo our forerunner and head being in heaven on their behalf, he will aſſuredly draw all his living members to himſelf. He has ſaid, *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo* ‡. And he has ſtipulated for them, that they ſhall, each in his

* John xvii. 3. † Heb. vi. 20. ‡ John xiv. 19.

appointed time, be with him where he is, to behold his glory *.

2. As their High-prieſt and Interceſſor. He preſents their perſons and their prayers acceptable to God. He bears the iniquity of their holy things. With this encouragement, weak and unworthy as they are in themſelves, and though their beſt ſervices are polluted, they find a liberty of acceſs; and becauſe he ever liveth, thus to make interceſſion for all who come unto God by him †, they know that he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt.

3. Though the heavens muſt receive and contain the holy human nature till the reſtitution of all things, he is not unmindful of them in their preſent circumſtances. He is ſeated upon the throne of univerſal dominion, and he exerciſes his authority and rule with an eſpecial view to their welfare. While he pleads for them on high, by the power of his Spirit he is preſent with them below. He comforts their hearts, enlivens their aſſemblies, and manages their concerns. He is their Shepherd, who gives them food, controuls their enemies, revives their fainting ſpirits, and reſtores their wanderings ‡. His ear is open to their prayers, his eye is upon them in every ſituation, and his arm ſtretched forth for their relief. Therefore, though perſecuted, they are not forſaken; though caſt down, they are not deſtroyed. And he has promiſed that he will not leave them, until he has done all that for them which his word has taught them to hope for; until he has made them victorious over all their enemies, and put the conqueror's ſong in their mouths, and a crown of life upon their heads.

This High and Holy One, this King of glory, who is ſeated on the throne of heaven, dwelleth alſo in the humble and lowly ſpirit. He thus ſolemnly,

* John xvii. 24. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Pſa. xxiii.

ly claims the throne of the heart of each of his people, which in a ſtate of nature is uſurped by ſelf and Satan; and he is thus willingly acknowledged and admitted in the day of his power. *Behold! he ſtands at the door, and knocks* *; and becauſe he is as yet unknown, he is for a while rejected. The bolts and bars of prejudice and unbelief withſtand his entrance. But when he comes on a purpoſe of grace, he will take no denial. For a ſeaſon he waits to be gracious. But he has an appointed hour, when he reveals his great name, and makes the ſoul ſenſible who he is! Then the gates of braſs and bars of iron are broken before him. His greatneſs and his goodneſs, what he is in himſelf, and what he has done and ſuffered for ſinners, are motives which cannot be reſiſted when they are truly underſtood. Satan, who, as the ſtrong one armed, long laboured to hinder him from his rightful poſſeſſion, is himſelf diſpoſſeſſed. The ſoul laments its former obſtinacy, throws down its arms, throws wide open its doors, and bids the King of glory welcome. Then old things paſs away, and all things become new. Such was the change the poor man experienced, out of whom Jeſus caſt a legion of evil ſpirits. At firſt, if he could, he would have prevented his kind purpoſe; he was afraid of his deliverer, and ſaid, *I beſeech thee torment me not* †. How wretched was his ſtate then, miſerable in himſelf, and a terror to others! But what a wonderful and happy alteration, when he ſat quietly at his Saviour's feet, clothed and in his right mind!

I cloſe the ſubject with the Apoſtle's inference, *Seeing then that we have ſo great a high prieſt, who is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion* ‡. Let not thoſe who know him be aſhamed of their attachment to him. You

* Rev. iii. 20. † Mark v. 7. ‡ Heb. iv. 14.

will not repent in a dying hour, that you once thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him, or devoted yourſelf with too much earneſtneſs to his ſervice. Nor yield to unbelief and fear. Though your enemies are many and mighty, and your trials great, greater is he that is with you. If the Lord, the Lord of hoſts, the Lord ſtrong and mighty in battle, be for you, who can be againſt you, ſo as effectually to harm you? Continue inſtant in prayer, perſevere in well-doing. Our aſcended Lord will one day return; and then they who have loved and ſerved, and truſted him here, *ſhall appear with him in glory* *.

Others, if they can, muſt prepare to meet him. But alas! How ſhall they ſtand before him? Or whither ſhall they flee from him whoſe preſence filleth the heavens and the earth †. Have they an arm like God? Or can they thunder with a voice like his? As yet he is proclaimed by the goſpel, a Saviour, ſeated upon a throne of grace, ſtretching forth the golden ſceptre of his love, and inviting ſinners to be reconciled. Now is the accepted time. Hereafter he will be ſeen upon a throne of judgment, to take vengeance of his enemies.

* Col. iii. 4. † Jer. xxiii. 24.

SER.

SERMON XXVII.

Meſſiah the Son of God.

HEBREWS i. 5.

For unto which of the angels ſaid he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

THOUGH every part of a revelation from God muſt of courſe be equally true, there may be a conſiderable difference even among truths propoſed by the ſame authority, with reſpect to their immediate importance. There are fundamental truths, the knowledge of which is eſſentially neceſſary to our peace and holineſs: and there are others of a ſecondary nature, which, though very uſeful in their proper connection, and though the right apprehenſion of them is greatly conducive to the comfort and eſtabliſhment of a believer, are not ſo neceſſary, but that he may be a true believer before he clearly underſtands them. Thus our Lord pronounced Peter Bleſſed *, for his acknowledgment of a truth, which had been revealed to him, not by fleſh and blood, but from above, though he was at that time very deficient in doctrinal knowledge. It is not eaſy to draw the line here, and preciſely to diſtinguiſh between fundamental and ſecondary truths; yet ſome attention to this diſtinction is expedient; and the want of ſuch attention has greatly contributed to foment and embitter controverſies in the church of Chriſt; while fallible men, from a miſtaken zeal for the faith once delivered to the ſaints, have laboured to enforce *all* their religious ſentiments with an e-

* Matt. xvi. 17.

qual and indiſcriminate vehemence. It is evident, that the truths eſſential to the very being of a Chriſtian muſt be known and experienced by all, of every nation, people, and language, who are taught of God *; for they, and they only, are Chriſtians indeed, who are thus taught. And therefore it ſeems to follow, that no doctrine, however true in itſelf, which humble and ſpiritual perſons, who ſtudy the ſcripture with prayer, and really depend upon divine teaching, are not agreed in, can be ſtrictly fundamental. And perhaps the chief part of the apparent diverſity of their ſentiments does not ſo often reſpect the truth itſelf, as the different acceptation they put upon the words and phraſes by which they endeavour to expreſs their meaning to each other.

However, if there be any doctrine fundamental, and neceſſary to be rightly underſtood, what the ſcripture teaches concerning the perſon of MESSIAH the Redeemer, muſt be eminently ſo. Miſtakes upon this point muſt neceſſarily be dangerous. It cannot be a queſtion of mere ſpeculation, whether the Saviour be God or a creature; he muſt either be the one or the other: and the whole frame of our religion is unavoidably dependent upon the judgment we form of him. If he be a man only, or if he be an angel, though of the higheſt order, and poſſeſſed of excellencies peculiar to himſelf; ſtill, upon the ſuppoſition that he is but a creature, he muſt be infinitely inferior to his Maker, in compariſon of whoſe immenſity the difference between an angel and a worm is annihilated. Then all they who pay divine worſhip to Jeſus, who love him above all, truſt him with all their concerns for time and eternity, and addreſs him in the language of Thomas, *My Lord, and my God* †, are involved in the groſs and heinous crime of idolatry, by aſcribing to him that glory which

* M. liv. 13. † John xx. 28.

which the great God has declared *he will not give to another* *. On the contrary, if he be God over all bleſſed for ever, Jehovah, the Lord of hoſts, then they who refuſe him the honour due unto his name, *worſhip they know not what* †. For there is but one God; and, according to this plan, they who know him not in Chriſt, know him not at all, but are *without God in the world* ‡. The judgment we form of the Saviour demonſtrates likewiſe how far we know ourſelves. For it may be fairly preſumed, that they who think a creature capable of making atonement for their ſins, or of ſuſtaining the office of ſhepherd and biſhop of their ſouls, have too ſlight thoughts both of the evil of ſin, and of the weakneſs and wickedneſs of the human heart.

We aſcribe it therefore to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that a doctrine ſo important, the very pillar and ground of truth, is not aſſerted once, or in a few places of ſcripture only. It does not depend upon texts which require a nice ſkill in criticiſm, or a collation of ancient manuſcripts, to ſettle their ſenſe; but, like the blood in the animal economy, it pervades and enlivens the whole ſyſtem of revelation. The books of Moſes, the Pſalms, and the Prophets, all teſtify of *Him*, who was ſtyled the Son of God in ſo peculiar a ſenſe, that the apoſtle, in this paſſage, conſiders it as a ſufficient proof that he is by nature ſuperior to all creatures. The form of the queſtion implies the ſtrongeſt aſſertion of this ſuperiority; as if he had ſaid, Conceive of the higheſt and moſt exalted of the angels, it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that God would ſay to him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

The verſe contains three terms which require explanation, *My Son—Begotten—This day.* But who is ſufficient for theſe things? If I attempt to explain them, I wiſh to ſpeak with a caution and modeſty becoming

* Iſ. xlii. 8. † John iv. 22. ‡ Epheſ. ii. 12.

becoming the ſenſe I ought to have of my own weakneſs, and to keep upon ſafe ground; leſt, inſtead of elucidating ſo ſublime a ſubject, I ſhould darken counſel by words without knowledge. And I know of no ſafe ground to go upon in theſe enquiries, but the ſure teſtimony of ſcripture. It would be to the laſt degree improper to indulge flights of imagination, or a ſpirit of curioſity or conjecture upon this occaſion. Theſe are the deep things of God, in which, if we have not the guidance of his word and Spirit, we ſhall certainly bewilder ourſelves. Nor would I ſpeak in a poſitive dogmatizing ſtrain; at the ſame time I truſt the ſcripture will afford light ſufficient to preſerve us from a cold and comfortleſs uncertainty.

The gracious deſign of God in affording us his holy ſcripture, is to *make us wiſe unto ſalvation* *. His manner of teaching is therefore accommodated to our circumſtances. He inſtructs us in heavenly things by earthly. And to engage our confidence, to excite our gratitude, to animate us to our duty by the moſt affecting motives; and that the reverence we owe to his great and glorious Majeſty, as our Creator and Legiſlator, may be combined with love and cheerful dependence; he is pleaſed to reveal himſelf by thoſe names which expreſs the neareſt relation and endearment amongſt ourſelves. Thus he condeſcends to ſtyle himſelf the Father, the Huſband, and the Friend of his people. But though in this way we are aſſiſted in forming our conceptions of his love, compaſſion, and faithfulneſs, it is obvious that theſe names, when applied to him, muſt be underſtood in a ſenſe agreeable to the perfections of his nature, and in many reſpects different from the meaning they bear amongſt men. And thus, when we are informed that God has a Son, an only Son, an only begotten Son, it is our part to receive his

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

his teſtimony, to admire and adore: and for an explanation adapted to our profit and comfort, we are to conſult, not our own preconceived ideas, but the further declarations of his word, comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual, attending with the ſimplicity of children to his inſtructions, and avoiding, as much as poſſible, thoſe vain reaſonings, upon points above our comprehenſion, which, though flattering to the pride of our hearts, are ſure to indiſpoſe us for the reception of divine truth. A diſtinction in the divine nature, inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in terms, muſt be admitted, upon the teſtimony and authority of him, who alone can inſtruct us in what we are concerned to know of his adorable eſſence. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt, and theſe three are one* *. To each of theſe three the perfections of Deity are attributed and aſcribed in various parts of ſcripture. Each of them therefore is God; and yet we are ſure, both from ſcripture and reaſon, there is, there can be but one God. Thus far we can go ſafely; and that we can go no farther, that our thoughts are loſt and overwhelmed, if we attempt to repreſent to ourſelves how or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be eaſily accounted for, if any juſt reaſon can be given, why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us firſt, if we can, account for the nature, eſſence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the growth of a blade of graſs, or the virtues of the loadſtone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the duſt. Far from attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to my hearers, I rather wiſh to leave an impreſſion upon your minds, that it is to us (and perhaps to the higheſt created intelligences) incomprehenſible.

* 1 John v. 7.

henſible. But if it be contained in the ſcripture, (which I muſt leave to your own conſciences to determine in the ſight of God), it is thereby ſufficiently proved, and humble faith requires no other proof.

Allow me to confirm my own ſentiments, by an obſervation of a celebrated French writer * to the following purport:—"The whole difference, with reſpect to this ſubject, between the common people and the learned doctors, is—that while they are both equally ignorant, the ignorance of the people is modeſt and ingenuous, and they do not bluſh for being unable to ſee what God has thought fit to conceal. Whereas the ignorance of their teachers is proud and affected; they have recourſe to ſcholaſtic diſtinctions, and abſtract reaſonings, that they may not be thought upon a level with the vulgar."

The form of baptiſm preſcribed by our Lord for the uſe of his church, is thus expreſſed, *Baptiſing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt* †. It is evident, by comparing this ſentence with that which I before recited from the Epiſtle of John, that the WORD and the SON are ſynonymous terms, expreſſive of the ſame character. They are both the titles of MESSIAH. Of him John ſpoke, when he ſaid, *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us*; and of him God the Father ſaid, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Had God ſpoken thus to an angel, it would have been in effect ſaying, Thou art the Word, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made. But to which of all the angels would the great God uſe language like this?

Our Lord, in his conference with Nicodemus, was pleaſed to ſay, *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, &c. ‡. It was undoubtedly his deſign, by this expreſſion, to give to Nicodemus, and to us, the higheſt idea poſſible of the love of God to ſinners.

* Abbadie. † Matt. xxviii. 19. ‡ John iii. 16.

ſinners. He ſo loved the world, beyond deſcription or compariſon, that he gave his only begotten Son.—Surely then the gift ſpoken of muſt not be limited to ſignify the human nature only. This was not all that he gave. The human nature was the medium of the acts and ſufferings of MESSIAH; but he who aſſumed it was the Word, who was before all, and by whom all things were made. It is true the human nature was *given*, ſupernaturally formed by divine power, and born of a virgin. But he who was in the beginning God with God, was given to appear, obey, and ſuffer, in the nature of man, for us and for our ſalvation. And to him are aſcribed the perfections and attributes of Deity; of which the higheſt angels are no more capable, than the worms which creep upon the earth.

I cannot, therefore, ſuppoſe, that the title of Son of God is merely a title of office, or belonging only to the nature which he aſſumed; but that MESSIAH is the Son of God, as he is God and man in one perſon. If the forming a perfect and ſpotleſs man, like Adam when he was firſt created, could have effected our ſalvation, it would have been a great and undeſerved mercy to have vouchſafed the gift; but I think it would not have required ſuch very ſtrong language as the ſcripture uſes in deſcribing the gift of the Son of God. The God-man, the whole perſon of Chriſt, was ſent, came forth from the Father. The manhood was the offering; but the Word of God, poſſeſſed of the perfections of Deity, was the altar neceſſary to ſanctify the gift, and to give a value and efficacy to the atonement.

The term *begotten*, expreſſes with us the ground of relation between father and ſon, and upon which an only ſon is the heir of a father. I feel and confeſs myſelf at a loſs here. I might take up your time, and perhaps conceal my own ignorance, by borrowing from the writings of wiſer and better men than myſelf,

myſelf, a detail of what have been generally reputed the more prevailing orthodox ſentiments on this ſubject. But I dare not go beyond my own ideas. I ſhall not, therefore, attempt to explain the phraſe, *eternal generation*, becauſe I muſt acknowledge that I do not clearly underſtand it myſelf. Long before time began, the purpoſe of conſtituting the Mediator between God and ſinners was eſtabliſhed in the divine counſels. With reference to this, he himſelf ſpeaks, in the character of the Wiſdom of God. *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were among the ſons of men* *. If the Word of God had not engaged, according to an everlaſting and ſure covenant, to aſſume our nature, and to accompliſh our ſalvation, before the earth was formed, he would not have appeared afterwards; for we cannot with reaſon conceive of any new determinations ariſing in the mind of the infinite God, to whom what we call the paſt and the future are equally preſent. In this ſenſe, (if the expreſſion be proper to convey ſuch a ſenſe), I can conceive that he was the begotten Son of God from eternity; that is, ſet up and appointed from eternity for the office, nature, and work, by which, in the fulneſs of time, he was manifeſted to men. But if the terms, *begotten*, or *eternal generation*, be uſed to denote the manner of his eternal exiſtence in Deity, I muſt be ſilent. I believe him to be the eternal Son; I believe him to be the eternal God; and I wiſh not to exerciſe my thoughts and enquiries more than is needful, in things which are too high for me.

The ſcripture, in different places, evidently applies the purport of this phraſe, *I have begotten thee*, to tranſactions

* Prov. viii. 22. 31.

tranſactions which took place in time, *This day*, and particularly to two principal events.

1. His incarnation. Thus the angel to Mary, *The Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee* *; therefore alſo the holy thing which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the Son of God. So the Apoſtle, *In the fulneſs of time God ſent forth his Son made of a woman* †. And in the paſſage we are next to conſider, *When he bringeth his firſt begotten into the world, he ſaith, and let all the angels of God worſhip him.*

2. His reſurrection. To this purpoſe our text is quoted from the ſecond Pſalm. *The promiſe which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the ſame to the children, in that he hath raiſed up Jeſus again* ‡; as it is alſo written in the ſecond Pſalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And in another place he teaches us, that *he who was of the ſeed of David, according to the fleſh*, was declared to be *the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead* ‖.

After all, I would remind you, that the beſt knowledge of the doctrine of the perſon of Chriſt, that which affords life and comfort to the ſoul, is to be obtained, not ſo much by enquiry and ſtudy on our part, as by a gracious manifeſtation on his part. Prayer, attention to the great Teacher, a humble peruſal of the ſcripture, and a courſe of ſimple obedience to his known will, are the methods which he has preſcribed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of himſelf. Thus even babes are made wiſe; while they who are wiſe and prudent in their own ſight, the more they endeavour to inveſtigate and aſcertain the ſenſe of ſcripture, are frequently involved more and more in perplexity. He has given a promiſe and direction, for the encouragement of thoſe who ſincerely ſeek him. *He that hath my commandments*

* Luke i. 35. † Gal. iv. 4. ‡ Acts xiii. 32, 33. ‖ Rom. i. 4.

mandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf unto him *.

This is he with whom we have to do. In and by this Son of his love, we have acceſs by faith unto God. Unworthy and helpleſs in ourſelves, from hence we derive our plea; here we find a refuge; and on this we reſt, and build our hope, *that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*: who is ſo much *better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they* †.

* John xiv. 21. † Heb. i. 4.

SER-

SERMON XXVIII.

Meſſiah worſhipped by Angels.

HEBREWS i. 6.

Let all the angels of God worſhip him.

MANY of the Lord's true ſervants have been in a ſituation ſo nearly ſimilar to that of Elijah *, that like him they have been tempted to think they were left to ſerve him alone. But God had then a faithful people, and he has ſo in every age. The preaching of the goſpel may be compared to a ſtandard erected, to which they repair, and thereby become known to each other, and more expoſed to the notice and obſervation of the world. But we hope there are always many, who are enlightened by his word and Holy Spirit, and training up in the life of faith and holineſs, known and dear to God, though they have little advantage from public ordinances, and perhaps no opportunity of converſing with thoſe who are like-minded with themſelves. But even though the number of thoſe who viſibly profeſs the goſpel of the grace of God were much ſmaller than it is, we need not be diſheartened. If our ſight could pierce into the inviſible world, we ſhould be ſatisfied that there are more with us than againſt us †. And ſuch a power is attributed to faith. It is the evidence of things not ſeen ‡, becauſe it receives the teſtimony of ſcripture, and reſts upon it, as a certainty, and a demonſtration; requiring no other proof, either of doctrines or facts, than that they are contained in the ſure word of God. True Chriſtians therefore are comforted

* 1 Kings xix. 10. † 2 Kings vi. 16. ‡ Heb. xi. 1.

comforted by the aſſurance they have that their Saviour, the Lord of their hearts, is not ſo neglected and deſpiſed, nor his character ſo miſunderſtood and miſrepreſented in yonder land of light, as in this dark and degenerate world. Though too many here, like Feſtus, treat it as a matter of great indifference, whether Jeſus be dead or alive *; and aſk them with a taunt, What is your Beloved more than another beloved? they are not aſhamed, for they know whom they have believed; and if men will not join with them in admiring and praiſing him, they are ſure that they have the concurrence of far ſuperior beings. By faith they behold him ſeated upon a throne of glory, adored by all holy and happy intelligent creatures, whether angels, principalities, powers, or dominions. And when he was upon earth, in a ſtate of humiliation, though deſpiſed and rejected of men, he was ſeen and acknowledged by angels. Their warrant and ours is the ſame. He is propoſed to us as the object of our ſupreme love and dependence; and as *we* are enjoined to kiſs the Son and to pay him homage, ſo when God brought him into the world, he ſaid, *Let all the angels of God worſhip him.*

Though the bringing MESSIAH, the *firſt* or *only begotten*, into the world, may, as I have obſerved already, be applied to his incarnation, or to his reſurrection, I apprehend it rather deſigns the whole of his exhibition in the fleſh. At his aſcenſion, having finiſhed the work appointed for him to do, he was ſolemnly inveſted with authority and glory, and ſat down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high. But in his loweſt, no leſs than in his exalted ſtate, the dignity of his divine perſon is the ſame, yeſterday, to-day, and for ever. He was always the proper object of worſhip. It was agreeable to right, and to the nature of things, and a command worthy of God, that all the angels of God ſhould worſhip him.

The

* Acts xxv. 19.

The holy angels, that excel in ſtrength *, always do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. We might be certain therefore, that this higheſt and moſt comprehenſive command a creature is capable of receiving from his Creator, is fulfilled by them, even if we had no expreſs information of the fact. But we have repeated aſſurances to this purpoſe. Thus Iſaiah, when he ſaw his glory and ſpake of him, *ſaw the ſeraphim ſtanding; each one had ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory* †. I ſee not how the force of the argument ariſing from this paſſage, to prove that MESSIAH is the proper object of the moſt ſolemn adoration which creatures can offer to the Moſt High, can be evaded; unleſs any were hardy enough to aſſert, either that the prophet was himſelf impoſed upon, or has impoſed upon us, by a falſe viſion; or elſe, that the Apoſtle John ‡ was miſtaken when he applied this repreſentation to Jeſus Chriſt. But the apoſtle likewiſe had a viſion to the ſame effect; in which, while his people redeemed from the earth by his blood caſt their crowns at his feet, the angels were alſo repreſented as joining in the chorus of their praiſes, ſaying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing* ‖. In brief, he is the Lord of angels. The heavenly hoſt waited upon him, and ſung his praiſes at his birth. Angels miniſtered unto him in the wilderneſs §. And they are ſo entirely his ſervants, that, at his command, they are ſent forth to miniſter unto, and to attend upon his believing people. *Are they not all miniſtering* [λειτουργικα worſhipping] *ſpirits* ¶, adoring the divine Majeſty, yet *ſent*

* Pſ. ciii. 20. † Iſ. vi. ‡ John xii. 41.
‖ Rev. v. 12. § Luke ii. 13, 14. ¶ Heb. i. 14.

ſent forth to miniſter [εις διακονιαν to the ſervice] *to the heirs of ſalvation.* He is likewiſe the head of angels, though they are not in the ſame near relation to him as the ſinners whom he has redeemed with his blood; for he took on him their nature. There was no redemption appointed for the angels who kept not their firſt habitation. But the confirmation of thoſe who continue in holineſs and happineſs, is in and through him. *For all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, are gathered together in one* [ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι, reduced under one head into one body] *in him* *. And they are therefore ſtyled, in contradiſtinction from the others, The elect angels †. He is their life, and ſtrength, and joy, as he is ours, though they cannot ſing the whole ſong of his people. It is appropriate to the ſaved from amongſt men to ſay, This God ſhines glorious in our nature, he loved us, and gave himſelf for us.

Here then, as I have intimated, is a pattern and encouragement for us. The angels, the whole hoſt of heaven, worſhip him. He is Lord of all. We in this diſtant world have heard the report of his glory, have felt our need of ſuch a Saviour, and are, in ſome degree, witneſſes and proofs of his ability and willingneſs to ſave. He lived, he died, he aroſe, he reigns for us. Therefore humbly depending upon his promiſed grace, without which we can do nothing, we are reſolved, that whatever others do, we muſt, we will worſhip him, with the utmoſt powers of our ſouls. It is our determination and our choice, not only to praiſe and honour him with our lips, but to devote ourſelves to his ſervice, to yield ourſelves to his diſpoſal, to entruſt our all to his care, and to place our whole happineſs in his favour. I hope, in ſpeaking thus, I ſpeak the language of many of your hearts.

Some

* Epheſ. i. 10. † 1 Tim. v. 21.

Some reflections eaſily offer from this ſubject, with which I ſhall cloſe it.

1. They who love him, may rejoice in the thoughts of his glory. They have deeply ſympathized with him, when reading the hiſtory of his humiliation and paſſion. It has not been a light concern to them, that he endured agonies, that he was rejected, reviled, ſcourged, and ſlain. He who ſuffered theſe things was their beſt friend, their beloved Lord, and he ſuffered for their ſakes. In the glaſs of his word, and by the light of his Holy Spirit, he has been ſet forth as crucified before their eyes; and they have been crucified with him, and have had fellowſhip with him in his death. From hence they derive their indignation againſt ſin, and their indifference to the world, which treated him thus. But now he is no more a man of ſorrows; his head, which was once crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory; his face, which was defiled with ſpittle, ſhines like the ſun; his hands, which were manacled, wield the ſceptre of univerſal government; and, inſtead of being ſurrounded by inſulting men, he is now encircled by adoring angels. Therefore they rejoice with joy unſpeakable, expecting ſoon to ſee him as he is, and to be with him for ever, according to the gracious promiſes he has made them, and the tenor of his prevailing interceſſion for them.

2. What an honour does his exaltation and glory reflect upon his faithful followers? The world that rejected him pays little regard to them; they are ſlighted, or ſcorned, or pitied, and, in proportion as they manifeſt his ſpirit, experience a degree of the treatment which he met with; they are accounted viſionaries or hypocrites; many of them are great ſufferers; and few of them, comparatively, are diſtinguiſhed among men by abilities, influence, or wealth; they are pilgrims and ſtrangers upon earth; yet this God is their God. He who is worſhipped

by angels is not aſhamed to call them brethren *. They are nearly related to him who ſitteth upon the throne; and he is pleaſed to account them his portion, and his jewels. It doth not yet appear what they ſhall be; but the day is coming when their mourning ſhall be ended, their characters vindicated, and they ſhall ſhine like the ſun in the kingdom of their Lord. They ſhall ſtand before him with confidence, and not be aſhamed when he appears. Then ſhall the difference between the righteous and the wicked be clearly diſcerned. In that day the righteous ſhall ſay, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will ſave us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his ſalvation* †: while the others, however once admired or feared by mortals, the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, no leſs than thoſe of inferior rank, ſhall tremble, ſhall wiſh in vain to conceal themſelves, and ſhall ſay to the *mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth upon the throne, for the great day of his wrath is come* ‡. In that hour, the ſtriking deſcription in the book of Wiſdom (which, though apocryphal, is in this paſſage quite conſonant with the declarations of authentic ſcripture) will aſſuredly be realized. *Then ſhall the righteous man ſtand in great boldneſs before the face of ſuch as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they ſee it, they ſhall be troubled with terrible fear, and ſhall be amazed at the ſtrangeneſs of his ſalvation, ſo far beyond all that they looked for; and they repenting, and groaning for anguiſh of ſpirit, ſhall ſay within themſelves, This was he whom we had ſometimes in deriſion, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madneſs, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the ſaints* ‖!

3. We

* Heb. ii. 11. † Iſ. xxv. 9. ‡ Rev. vi. 15, 16. ‖ Wiſd. v. 1,—5.

3. We may well admire the condeſcenſion of this great King, who humbleth himſelf even to notice the worſhip of heaven, that he ſhould look upon the worſhip of ſinful men with acceptance, and permit ſuch worms as we are to take his holy name upon our polluted lips. If we know ourſelves, we muſt be conſcious of ſuch defects and defilement attending our beſt ſervices, as are ſufficient to affect us with ſhame and humiliation. What wanderings of imagination, what riſings of evil thoughts, what unavoidable though unallowed workings of ſelf-complacence, mingle with our prayers and praiſes, and diſturb us in our ſecret retirements, in the public aſſembly, and even at the table of the Lord! I hope we know enough of this, to be ſenſible that we need forgiveneſs, not only for our poſitive tranſgreſſions of his will, but for our ſincereſt, warmeſt, and moſt enlarged attempts to render him the glory due to his name! Yet we are incompetent and partial judges of ourſelves; we know but little of the evil of our own hearts, and have but a ſlight ſenſe of the malignity of that evil which is within our obſervation. But the Lord ſearches the heart and the reins; to him all things are *naked*, without covering, *open*, * without concealment. He underſtandeth our thoughts afar off, and beholdeth us exactly as we are. Our diſlike of ſin is proportionable to our attainments in holineſs, which are exceedingly ſhort of the ſtandard. But he is infinitely holy, and therefore evil is unſpeakably hateful to him.—How vile and abominable therefore muſt our ſins appear in his view! Indeed, if he was ſtrict to mark what is amiſs, we could not ſtand a moment before him; nor would it be agreeable to his majeſty and purity to accept any ſervices or prayers at our hands, if we preſumed to offer them in our own name. But now there is an atonement provided, and a way of acceſs to a throne of

* Heb. iv. 13.

grace, ſprinkled with the blood which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Now that we have an Advocate, Interceſſor, and High Prieſt, to bear the iniquity of our holy things, we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the great and holy God vouchſafes to admit ſuch ſinners into communion with himſelf. He invites us to draw near with boldneſs; and becauſe of ourſelves we know not how to pray as we ought *, he favours us with the influence of his Holy Spirit. It is a great inſtance of the power of faith, that, remembering what we have been, and feeling what we are, and having ſome right apprehenſion of him with whom we have to do, we are enabled to approach him with confidence, and to open our hearts to him with greater liberty than we can uſe to our deareſt earthly friends. His people know, by many infallible proofs, that his preſence is with them in their ſecret retirements, and in their public aſſemblies, according to his promiſe. He hears and anſwers their prayers, he revives their ſpirits, he renews their ſtrength; he gives them reaſon to ſay, that a day in his courts is better than a thouſand of the world's days. Such are their expectations, and ſuch, in the exerciſe of faith, is their experience. They worſhip him whom the angels worſhip; and they know, that, unworthy and defective as they are, their worſhip is no leſs acceptable to him than that of the angels in glory, by virtue of their relation to him, who is Lord both of angels and men.

4. Hence we may infer the neceſſity of that change of heart, which the ſcripture expreſſes by a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and other repreſentations, which denote it can only be effected by divine power. Till we are the ſubjects of this operation, we are incapable of enjoying, or even of ſeeing the kingdom of God †. Though to outward appearance the congregation before me ſeem all

* Rom. viii. 26. † John iii. 3.

all to be ſerious and attentive, as if engaged in the ſame deſign, and animated with the ſame deſire and hope, he to whom our hearts are known doubtleſs obſerves a great difference. Some of you, though cuſtom, or a regard to your connections, bring you hither, yet muſt be ſenſible that this is not your choſen ground, and that theſe are not the ſubjects which give you pleaſure. We preach Chriſt Jeſus and him crucified—Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. The Lord ſees, though I cannot, the indiſpoſition of your hearts towards him. You are ſoon weary and uneaſy; and you wiſh to throw the blame of your uneaſineſs upon the preacher. You regard his method, his manner, his expreſſions, with no friendly intention, in hopes of noticing ſomething that may ſeem to juſtify your diſlike; and a ſermon, not very long in itſelf, is to you very tedious. We wiſh well to your ſouls, we ſtudy to find out acceptable words; for though we dare not trifle with or flatter you, we are unwilling to give you juſt offence. But if you will be faithful to yourſelves, you may perceive that it is not ſo much the length or the manner, as the ſubject of our ſermons that diſguſts you. You would, perhaps, hear with more attention and patience, did we ſpeak leſs of him whom the angels worſhip. There are aſſemblies more ſuited to your taſte, and there are public ſpeakers to whom you can probably afford a willing ear, for a much longer time than we detain you; becauſe there you are at home. You are of the world, and you love the world. The amuſements, the buſineſs, the converſe, and the cuſtoms of the world, ſuit your inclination. But here you are not, if I may ſo ſpeak, in your proper element: and yet it may be, there are perſons in the ſame ſeat with you, who think themſelves happy to hear what you hear with indifference or diſguſt. If you knew your ſtate as a ſinner, your need of a Saviour, and the excellency and glory of

the Saviour whom we preach to you, *you* likewiſe would be pleaſed; and a preacher of very moderate powers would fix your attention, and gain your eſteem, if he preached this goſpel. But what ideas do you form of a future ſtate? Surely you cannot ſuppoſe, that in the eternal world you will meet with any of the poor expedients you have recourſe to now, for filling up your time, which otherwiſe would hang heavy upon your hands. To attempt a detail of the round of vanities which conſtitute a worldly life, would be unſuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. Let it ſuffice, that death will remove you from them all. If they are now neceſſary to what you account your happineſs, muſt you not of courſe be miſerable without them? If you believe you ſhall exiſt hereafter, do you not deſire heaven? But ſuch a heaven as the word of God deſcribes could not afford you happineſs, unleſs your mind be previouſly changed and diſpoſed to reliſh it. Neither the employment nor the company of heaven would be pleaſing to you. It is a ſtate, where all the inhabitants unite in admiring and adoring him who died upon the croſs. If this ſubject is diſpleaſing to you here, it would be much more ſo there. Heaven itſelf would be a hell to an unhumbled, an unholy ſoul. Conſider this ſeriouſly, while there is time to ſeek his face; and tremble at the thoughts of being cut off by death in your preſent ſtate, inſenſible as you are of who he is, and what he has done for ſinners. May he enlighten your underſtanding, and enable you to ſee the things pertaining to your true peace, before they are for ever hidden from your eyes!

SER-

SERMON XXIX.

Gifts received for the Rebellious.

PSAL. lxviii. 18.

Thou haſt aſcended on high, thou haſt led captivity captive: Thou haſt received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

WHEN Joſeph exchanged a priſon for the chief honour and government of Egypt *, the advantage of his exaltation was felt by thoſe who little deſerved it. His brethren hated, and had conſpired to kill him. And though he was preſerved from death, they were permitted to ſell him for a bond-ſervant. *He* owed his ſervitude, impriſonment, and ſufferings to them; and *they* were afterwards indebted to him for their lives, ſubſiſtence, honour, and comfort; God in a wonderful manner over-ruling their evil conduct for future good to themſelves. Thus Jeſus was deſpiſed, rejected, and ſold; and *he* was actually ſlain. But he aroſe and aſcended. The man of ſorrows took poſſeſſion of the throne of glory; and not for himſelf only. His honour is the ſource of happineſs to thoſe who were once his enemies, and rebellious againſt him. For the ſake of ſuch he lived and died. For their ſakes he lives and reigns. He fought, conquered, and triumphed over *their* enemies. As their repreſentative, he received gifts to beſtow upon them: Such gifts as their neceſſities required, derived from the

* Gen. xlv. 4, 5.

relation he was pleaſed to ſtand in to them, and from the value and dignity of his engagements on their behalf: Such gifts as he alone could communicate, and which alone could reſtore them to the favour of God, and revive his image in their hearts; ſo as to make it ſuitable to his holineſs and truth, for the Lord God to return to his polluted temples, and to dwell in them and among them.

I formerly obſerved *, that this Pſalm and the twenty-fourth were probably compoſed and firſt publiſhed on the memorable occaſion, when David, having obtained the victory over his numerous enemies, and ſettled his kingdom in peace, removed the ark, which till then had no fixed reſidence, into Zion. The apoſtle's application of this paſſage † authoriſes us to conſider that tranſaction as typical of our Lord's aſcenſion. Jeſus is the true ark. The holy law of God was in his heart; his obedience unto death was fully commenſurate to the demands of the law ‡; as the mercy-ſeat, or propitiation, which covered the ark, was exactly equal to its dimenſions. He who had thus obeyed on earth, aſcended on high, the everlaſting gates unfolded, and he *entered into the holy place not made with hands, there to appear in the preſence of God for us* ‖. In this ſtate he is highly exalted upon the throne of glory, and adminiſters all power in heaven and in earth. From hence is the honour, ſafety, and happineſs of thoſe who believe in him. They have nothing to plead for themſelves. But, unworthy as they are, he is not aſhamed to own them; and he aſſures them, that all he did, and that all he has received, ſo far as they are capable of ſharing in it, is for them. The clauſes, as they lie in the text, ſuggeſt a convenient method for our meditations, and will lead me briefly to conſider four points;

His

* Page 1. † Eph. iv. 8. ‡ Rom. iii. 25. ‖ Heb. ix. 24.

His *aſcenſion*—his *victories*—*the gifts he received for men*—and *the great end for which he beſtows them.*

I. *Thou haſt aſcended on high.* God formed man originally for himſelf, and gave him an anſwerable capacity, ſo that no inferior good can ſatisfy and fill his mind. Man was likewiſe, by the conſtitution and will of his Maker, immortal, provided he perſevered in obedience. But ſin degraded and ruined him, ſhut the gates of paradiſe and the gates of heaven againſt him. Man deſtroyed himſelf; but wiſdom and mercy interpoſed for his recovery. A promiſe was given of the ſeed of the woman, who ſhould break the ſerpent's head, defeat his policy, deſtroy his power, and repair the miſchiefs he had introduced by ſin. MESSIAH fulfilled this promiſe. And when he had finiſhed all that was appointed for him on earth, as the ſecond Adam, the head and repreſentative of his people, he aſcended on high, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As an illuſtrious proof to the univerſe, that God is reconciled; that there is forgiveneſs with him for ſinners who implore his mercy; one in our nature, and on our behalf, has taken poſſeſſion of the kingdom. The ſeries of texts in this part of the oratorio recals this ſubject frequently to our thoughts; nor can we think of it too often. It is the foundation of our hopes, the ſource of our ſublimeſt joys, and the ſufficient, the only ſufficient anſwer to all the ſuggeſtions by which guilt, fear, unbelief, and Satan, fight againſt our peace. Surrounded as we are with enemies and difficulties, we plead againſt every accuſation and threatening, that our head is in heaven; we have an Advocate with the Father, a High Prieſt upon the throne, who, becauſe he ever liveth to make interceſſion, is able to ſave to the uttermoſt. This is all our plea, nor do we deſire any other. His aſcenſion on high, is a ſure pledge that

his ſervants ſhall follow him*. And even at preſent, by faith they aſcend and are ſeated with him in the heavenly places †. They behold inviſibles with the eye of their mind; they realize the glorious ſcene, from which they are ſeparated by the veil of fleſh and blood. They know that, even now, day and night, day without night, myriads of golden harps and happy voices reſound his praiſe. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forſaken upon the croſs, is now the Lord of glory. In the thought of his glory they greatly rejoice, becauſe they love him, and becauſe they expect ſhortly to be with him.

II. *Thou haſt led captivity captive.* The expreſſion is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, ſo that captivity itſelf is taken captive. The ſpirit and force of it is deſtroyed; and his people, when releaſed by him, and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from thoſe whoſe captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a priſoner in chains. The energy of the phraſe is not unlike that of the apoſtle, which we are hereafter to conſider, *death is ſwallowed up in victory.* Man by nature is a captive, in a ſtate of confinement and bondage, from which he cannot eſcape by any addreſs or effort of his own.

He is a captive to ſin; a ſinful ſtate is a ſtate of bondage; and this, notwithſtanding the ſinner is a willing captive, ſpeaks ſwelling words of vanity, and boaſts of liberty, while he is the ſervant, the ſlave of corruption. He is not always, and in every ſenſe, a willing captive. Conſcience ſometimes remonſtrates, fills him with fears and forebodings, which make him ſtruggle to be free. And there are many ſins, which, beſides being offences againſt the law of God, are directly contrary to the ſinner's preſent intereſt and welfare; and would be ſo upon his own plan,

* John xii. 26. † Eph. ii. 6.

plan, and if he was wholly his own maſter, and had no account to render of his conduct. Perſons enſlaved to habits of lewdneſs or drunkenneſs, need not be told from the pulpit, that the courſes they purſue are injurious to their health, their buſineſs, or ſubſtance, their reputation, and their peace. They know it and feel it, without a monitor. There are ſeaſons, when the ill conſequences they bring upon themſelves, make them ſick of the drudgery, and excite ſome efforts towards a reform. But in vain. The next return of temptation bears down all their reſolutions like a torrent, and, after every attempt to amend, they uſually become worſe than before. For none can eſcape, unleſs the Son makes them free. His grace can overcome the moſt obſtinate habits of licentiouſneſs, and implant the contrary habits of purity and temperance. But they who are not delivered by him muſt die in their chains.

III. *Thou haſt received gifts, even for the rebellious.* To beſtow gifts upon the miſerable, is *bounty;* but to beſtow them upon rebels, is *grace.* The greatneſs of the gifts contraſted with the characters of thoſe who receive them, diſplays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer's grace. He came to ſave, not the *unhappy* only, but the *ungodly.* He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life, to his enemies; whoſe minds are ſo entirely alienated from him, that until he makes them willing, in the day of his power, their minds are determined againſt accepting any favour from him. They live long in contempt of the law and authority of God; and though juſtly obnoxious to his diſpleaſure, while left to themſelves, they deſpiſe and reject the propoſals of his mercy. If they ſometimes acknowledge themſelves to be ſinners, they ſtill preſume that they are able to procure his favour by their own performances. They ſtrangely imagine they have a ſufficient ground of hope, ſo long as it appears to themſelves that they are not altogether ſo bad as

others. And when, by the gospel, the Lord treats them as sinners already justly condemned by the tenor of his holy laws, and informs them of the exigency of their case; that nothing less than the resources of his infinite wisdom, and the most expensive exertion of his unspeakable love, can possibly save them from destruction; the pride of their hearts rises against his declarations. His wisdom, in their view, is folly; and his love provokes their enmity and scorn. He says of MESSIAH, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;* but the language of their heart is, *We will not have him to reign over us* *. They revile and oppose the messengers of his grace, account them enemies, charge them as troublers of their peace, and as those who turn the world upside down: and, when not restrained by the providence of God, inflict upon them, besides, reproaches, stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. If their dearest friends, and those who are connected with them by the nearest ties of relation, submit to the testimony of God, and yield themselves to the appointed Saviour, they are treated as apostates from the general opinion. This defection from the common cause, is often sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations, to dissolve the closest intimacy, to raise a person foes in his own household, and to excite envy, hatred, and malice, in those who once professed esteem and love. Can the spirit of rebellion rise higher, than when they who have insulted the authority, defied the power, and resisted the government and will of the great God, proceed at length to trample upon his tenders of reconciliation, and to affront him in that concern which of all others is dearest to him, the glory of his grace in the person of his Son? Yet this is no exaggerated representation. Such is the disposition of the heart of man towards God; such were some of us; and such, I fear,

* Luke xix. 14.

fear, ſome of us are to this hour. I do not ſay, that this enmity of the carnal mind acts, in every perſon who is not ſubject to the grace of God, with equal rage and violence. In a land of light, liberty, and civilization, like ours, a variety of circumſtances may concur to ſet bounds to its exerciſe; education, a natural gentleneſs of temper, and even intereſt, may keep it within limits of decorum, eſpecially towards ſome individuals; but I affirm, or rather the ſcripture declares, that enmity againſt God, a diſaffection to his goſpel, no leſs than to his law, and a diſlike to thoſe who profeſs and obey the truth, are principles deeply rooted in our nature, as fallen: and, however they may ſeem dormant in ſome perſons for a ſeaſon, would operate vigorouſly, if circumſtances were ſo to alter as to afford a fair occaſion. For, as of old, *he that was born after the fleſh perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit* *, even ſo it is now. And it is ſtill as true as in the apoſtle's days, that *all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus* †, *ſhall*, in one degree or form or other, *ſuffer perſecution* from thoſe who *will not*.

Thus men are characterized in the word of God: Rebels and enemies, having *a neck of iron*, to denote their obſtinacy; *a brow of braſs* ‡, to expreſs their inſolence and preſumption; and *a heart of ſtone* ‖, inſenſible to the ſofteſt methods of perſuaſion; incapable of receiving tender, kind, and generous impreſſions, though they are wooed and beſought by the conſideration of the mercies of God, of the dying agonies of MESSIAH; unleſs that mighty power be diſplayed in their favour, which brought forth ſtreams of water from the rock in the wilderneſs.

MESSIAH died, aroſe, and aſcended on high, that he might receive gifts for rebels of this ſpirit and diſpoſition. The one grand gift I ſhall ſpecify, is, indeed, comprehenſive of every other good: The gift

* Gal. iv. 29. † 2 Tim. iii. 12. ‡ Iſ. xlviii. 4. ‖ Ezek. xxxvi. 26

gift of the Holy Spirit. He ſaid to his ſorrowing diſciples, *It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will ſend him unto you* *. Soon after his aſcenſion, this promiſe was fulfilled. The diſciples were filled with the Holy Spirit †; and the people who had ſlain the Lord, were pricked to the heart, repented of their ſin, received faith in him whom they had pierced, and experienced joy and peace in believing.

That the goſpel is preached upon earth by a ſucceſſion of miniſters called and furniſhed for that ſervice, and that the goſpel, when preached, is not rejected by all, as it is by many, is wholly to be aſcribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whoſe office and covenant-engagement it is, to convince *the world of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgment* ‡, and to glorify MESSIAH. He opens the eyes of the underſtanding, ſubdues the ſtubborn will, ſoftens, or rather removes the heart of ſtone, and gives a feeling tender heart, a heart of fleſh. Then the rebels relent and ſue for mercy; then they obtain faith, repentance, remiſſion, a full and free ſalvation, and all the gifts which MESSIAH has received for them.

IV. His ultimate deſign in favour of rebellious men, the great final cauſe of his mediation, and particularly of his beſtowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, is, *that the Lord God may dwell among them.* Man was created in the image of God, who formed him for himſelf. But he ſinned, and was forſaken. God withdrew his light and love from him, and man ſunk into darkneſs and miſery. Sin and Satan took poſſeſſion of the heart, which was originally deſigned to be the temple of the living God. But the Lord had a merciful purpoſe, to return in a way worthy of his perfections. Without him, the ſouls of men, and the whole human race, as to their proper happineſs, are like what the earth would

* John xvi. 7. † Acts, ii. 4, 37. ‡ John xvi. 9, 11.

would be without the ſun, dark, cold, fruitleſs, and comfortleſs. But the knowledge of MESSIAH, like the ſun, enlightens the world and the heart.

When in the day of his power, by the revelation of his light and love, he deſtroys the dominion of ſin, and diſpoſſeſſes Satan, he reclaims his own, and takes poſſeſſion for himſelf. The heart, ſprinkled with the blood of Jeſus, and anointed with the holy unction, becomes a conſecrated temple of the Holy Ghoſt. This perſuaſion, though now by many, who have not renounced the name of Chriſtian, deemed the eſſence of enthuſiaſm, was once thought eſſential to Chriſtianity; ſo that the apoſtle ſpeaks of it as an obvious incontrovertible fact, with which no true Chriſtian could be unacquainted. *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt* *? Again, he ſpeaks of Chriſt dwelling in the heart †. *Chriſt in you the hope of glory* ‡. And in another place, *Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them* ‖: agreeably to his promiſe by the prophets. He liveth in them, as the principle of their life, wiſdom, and power; therefore the apoſtle ſays, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me* §. There is a mutual indwelling between the Lord and his people: they in him as the branch in the vine; and he in them as the ſap in the branch: He in them as in his temples; they in him as in their ſtrong tower of defence. And from hence we infer the duration of their life of grace, that it ſhall continue and ſpring up into everlaſting life; ſince it is properly not their own, but his; and ſince he has ſaid, *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.*

He dwells likewiſe among his people in their collective capacity. His whole church, compriſing all the members of his myſtical body, *built upon the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets*, form a building fitly

* 2 Cor. vi. 19. † Eph. iii. 17. ‡ Col. i. 27.
‖ 2 Cor. vi. 16. § Gal. ii. 20.

fitly framed together, a palace, a holy temple for the Lord the great King. He dwelleth likewiſe in every particular ſociety who walk by his rule, and adorn the profeſſion of his truth by a converſation becoming the goſpel. He is *a wall of fire round about* them, and a *glory in the midſt of them* *. When they meet together in his name, he is there. He walks in the midſt of the golden candleſticks. It is his preſence that gives life and efficacy to all his ordinances, and communicates a power to his word, by which the minds of his worſhipping people are enlightened, ſtrengthened, healed, and comforted. Here he manifeſts himſelf to them, as he does not unto the world; and they can adopt the words of the Pſalmiſt, *A day in thy courts is better than a thouſand.* To his preſence they owe their peace and increaſe, their union and protection. And if he withdraws, *Ichabod* may be written upon their ſolemn aſſemblies †; for even his own appointments can afford them neither profit nor pleaſure, unleſs they are animated by his glory. Their graces languiſh, their harmony is interrupted, ſtrifes and diſſenſions take place, evil roots of bitterneſs ſpring up to trouble and defile them ‡; *men ariſe* from among themſelves, *ſpeaking perverſe things, and fierce wolves break in, not ſparing the flock* ‖, if the good Shepherd ſuſpends his influence and preſence.

I truſt he dwells and walks in the midſt of us. He is here as an obſerver, and as a gracious benefactor. He ſees who *draw near him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him;* and he likewiſe takes notice of them that fear and love him, and who eſteem the light of his countenance to be better than life. *The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth likewiſe with thoſe that are of a contrite and humble ſpirit* §, to revive and bleſs them.

SER-

* Zech. ii. 5, 10. † 1 Sam. iv. 21. ‡ Heb. xii. 15.
‖ Acts xx. 29, 30. § Iſ. lvii. 15.

SERMON XXX.

The Publication of the Goſpel.

PSALM lxviii. 11.

The Lord gave the word, great was the company of thoſe that publiſhed it. [Or, of the preachers.]

PERHAPS no one Pſalm has given greater exerciſe to the ſkill and the patience of commentators and critics, than the ſixty-eighth. I ſuppoſe the difficulties do not properly belong to the Pſalm, but ariſe from our ignorance of various circumſtances to which the Pſalmiſt alludes; which probably were at that time generally known and underſtood. The firſt verſe is the ſame with the ſtated form of benediction which was uſed whenever the ark of the Lord ſet forward while Iſrael ſojourned in the wilderneſs *: which confirms the prevailing opinion, that the Pſalm was primarily deſigned as an act of thankſgiving, to accompany the removal of the ark to Zion by David. The ſeventh and eight verſes are repeated, with little variation, from the ſong of Deborah †. The leading ſcope of the whole appears to be, firſt, a recapitulation of God's gracious dealing with Iſrael, and of the great things he had done for them, from the time he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt; and then, a tranſition, in the ſpirit of prophecy, to the far greater things he would do for his people, under and by the goſpel diſpenſation, in conſequence of MESSIAH'S exaltation to receive gifts for rebellious men. This verſe, though the particular occaſion is not ſpecified, probably refers to ſome ſeaſon of deliverance

* Numb. x. 35. † Judges v. 4, 5.

liverance or victory, when the women, according to the cuſtom of the nation, aſſembled to praiſe the Lord, with timbrels, ſongs, and dances *. The ſongs and reſponſes of Miriam and her companions, and of the women who welcomed Saul and David after the defeat of the Philiſtine †, I have formerly mentioned as inſtances ‡. The word which is rendered, *Thoſe who publiſhed or preached*, being expreſſed with a femine termination, leads the mind to this ſenſe. But we are not neceſſarily confined to it; for the word rendered *preacher* in the book of Eccleſiaſtes, is likewiſe in the feminine form, though we are ſure the perſon intended by it was Solomon.

However, this paſſage is properly introduced in *The Meſſiah*, and in its proper place, immediately after the view given of our Saviour's triumphant aſcenſion, as it leads us to conſider the firſt viſible effect of that great event: for ſoon afterwards, *when the day of Pentecoſt was fully come, the Lord gave the word* ‖. The Holy Spirit, the precious gift, which Jeſus had received for rebellious men, deſcended with viſible emblems, and a powerful energy, and inſpired and qualified his diſciples for the great work of eſtabliſhing and ſpreading his ſpiritual kingdom. From that hour, great was the number of the preachers, and great was the ſucceſs and efficacy of their miſſion. So that in a few years the goſpel ſpread like the light, from Jeruſalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermoſt parts of the earth. And he who ſaid, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world* §, has, by the ſame Spirit, perpetuated his word, and a ſucceſſion of preachers, to our time; and has promiſed to perpetuate and work by the ſame means, till time ſhall be no more.

My text, therefore, if not a direct prophecy of the publication of the goſpel, is at leaſt a fit motto to a diſcourſe

* Exod. xv. † 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. ‡ Ser. VI. page 66.
‖ Acts ii. 1,—4. § Matt. xxviii. 20.

diſcourſe on this very important ſubject. We may conſider it in two ſenſes, which, though ſomething different, are equally agreeable to the words before us, and to the general tenor of the ſcripture.

I. *That the meſſage is the Lord's.* He gave the word, and preſcribed to his ſervants the ſubject-matter of their preaching.

II. *That the meſſengers employed are called and ſent forth by him.* The Lord gave the word or command; in conſequence of which word, the number of preachers was great, as when in the beginning he ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light.*

I. The Lord gave the word which the multitude of preachers went forth to publiſh. His merciful deſign was great, to deliver ſinners from bondage, miſery, and death; and to bleſs them with liberty, life, and peace. But they are by nature rebellious and obſtinate, and muſt be *made* willing. He only can ſubdue their prejudices, and ſoften their ſpirits; and he has promiſed to diſplay his power in their favour by a certain mean of his own appointment, and we cannot expect that he will do it in any other way. This mean is the goſpel, which, for its admirable ſuitableneſs and efficacy, is commended to us as *his wiſdom and his power* *. He has given it for this purpoſe, and his bleſſing makes it ſucceſsful. He has ſaid concerning it, *As the rain cometh down and the ſnow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give ſeed to the ſower, and bread to the eater; ſo ſhall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it ſhall not return unto me void, but it ſhall accompliſh that which I pleaſe; it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto I ſent it* †. It has been confirmed by the experience of ages, that no mean but this can produce the deſirable effect. It is confirmed, by obſervation, in the preſent day. If the wiſdom of man, if learning, if oratory, if animated deſcriptions

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. † Iſ. lv. 10, 11.

deſcriptions of the beauty of virtue, and pathetic perſuaſions to the practice of it, could reform, we ſhould be a reformed people. But alas! this is only to oppoſe a mound of ſand to the violence of a flood. Notwithſtanding many ingenious ſermons and treatiſes upon this plan are admired and praiſed, wickedneſs prevails and triumphs. They have little influence upon the conduct of civil life; and, I may boldly ſay, no influence to inſpire the heart with the love and peace of God, and to bring it into a habit of ſubjection to his will and command. Nothing will do this but the goſpel, the word which the Lord has given. This alone ſhews the evil of ſin in its true light, affords a ſolid ground for the hope of mercy, and furniſhes thoſe motives which alone are ſufficient to break the force of the temptations and difficulties with which we have to conflict. When this word is ſimply and cordially received, an immediate and wonderful change takes place. The ſinner abandons his falſe hopes and vain purſuits, is freed from his former ſlavery to the love of the world and the fear of man, and becomes the willing ſervant of him who redeemed him with his own blood.

But we are ſometimes aſked, what we underſtand by the goſpel? The uſe of the term in a reſtrained ſenſe, ſo as to imply there are but few comparatively who preach it, is deemed invidious and aſſuming; and it is ſuppoſed by many, that a ſermon, if delivered from a pulpit, and if the text be taken from the Bible, muſt of courſe be the goſpel. It is undeniable, however, that there are a variety of different and oppoſite ſentiments delivered from pulpits; and ſurely the goſpel cannot be oppoſite, contrary, yea contradictory to itſelf! It is a mournful conſideration, that multitudes of people are not qualified to judge of this point. Not properly for want of ability, for many of them are perſons of good ſenſe and diſcernment, and can judge and talk well upon other ſubjects; but for

for want of attention. Their application is engrossed by the demands of business or pleasure, and they have neither leisure nor taste for a careful perusal of the scriptures, nor for the examination of religious sentiments. If the language and elocution of the preacher be good, and if there be no close and painful address to the conscience, they are satisfied. The Apostle Paul undoubtedly preached the gospel; and he tells us himself that he preached Christ crucified; he preached Christ, as appointed of God, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* *. He preached the cross of Christ †, he gloried in it, and he determined to glory in nothing else. The gospel treats all mankind as already in a state of condemnation; it declares their utter inability to save or help themselves; and it gives assurance of pardon and salvation to all who believe in the Son of God. That they may be encouraged and enabled to believe, it describes the dignity of his person, the necessity and greatness of his sufferings, the completeness of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession—his love, authority, power, and faithfulness. These truths revealed and applied to a guilty conscience, by the power of the Holy Spirit, produce faith. The sinner perceives the sufficiency and excellency of such a Saviour, commits himself to his compassion and care, and renounces every other hope and service. He looks to the Saviour by the eye of his mind, with desire aud admiration, and derives life from his death, healing from his wounds, as the Israelites, when wounded, were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. And not only is the conscience relieved, by this knowledge of Christ crucified—the understanding is likewise enlightened, the judgment is formed, the affections regulated and directed by it. Then old things pass away, all becomes new. The love of sin departs, and the future life is devoted to him, who therefore *died*

* 1 Cor. i. 30. † Gal. vi. 14.

died and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living *.

There is likewiſe a certain energy or power which accompanies the goſpel when it is truly preached, which ſufficiently characterizes and diſtinguiſhes it from all other religious ſchemes and ſyſtems. Our Lord, during his perſonal miniſtry, frequently gave proofs that he knew the heart of man. When Zaccheus thought himſelf unknown and unſeen, he called him by his name †. He reminded Nathanael of what had paſſed in ſecret under the fig-tree ‡; and by a few words, brought to the remembrance of the woman of Samaria all that ſhe had done in her life ‖. A ſimilar effect accompanies the preaching of his goſpel to this day. The goſpel is preached, when they who are preſent find the ſecrets of their hearts are made manifeſt; when the preacher, who perhaps never ſaw them before, reminds them of what they have done, or ſaid, or thought, poſſibly of things tranſacted long ago, and almoſt forgotten by themſelves; and likewiſe deſcribes the very feelings of their hearts while he is ſpeaking to them. It is uſually in this way that conviction of ſin firſt takes place; and in this way, that a convinced burdened ſinner meets with ſeaſonable ſupport and direction, ſo exactly ſuited to his caſe, that he almoſt thinks the preacher is ſpeaking to none but himſelf. No preachers but thoſe who ſpeak in conformity to the word which the Lord gave, have this power over the heart and conſcience.

II. It is owing to the word, the appointment, and power of God, that any perſons are induced or enabled to preach this goſpel. Men may, indeed, aſſume the office of a preacher upon other grounds; there are too many who do. But though they ſpeak in the name of the Lord, and as his miniſters, if he has not ſent them, they cannot declare his meſſage in

* Rom. xiv. 9. † Luke xix. 5. ‡ John i. 48. ‖ John iv. 29.

in ſuch a manner as to make full proof of their miniſtry *. They may profit themſelves, according to their low views, and may obtain ſuch honours and emoluments as the world can give; but they have not the honour which cometh from God only. They are not wiſe to win ſouls †. They have no teſtimony in the conſciences of their hearers. They may deliver truths occaſionally, which are valuable and uſeful in their proper places; but for want of knowing how to connect them with what the apoſtle ſtyles, *The truth as it is in Jeſus* ‡, they are unable either to break the hard heart, or to heal the wounded ſpirit. The thoughtleſs are not alarmed, nor the ignorant inſtructed. The wicked go on in their evil ways—

The hungry ſheep look up, but are not fed.

Nay we ſee, in fact, though a few perſons may ſtill be found, who place their religion in a dull, unmeaning attendance upon the form of public worſhip, upon any form in which it was their lot to be educated; yet, in many places, the bulk of the people, by their contempt of the Lord's day, and by their cuſtomary manner of abſenting themſelves from their appointed teachers, give ſufficient proof that they have neither found, nor expect to find, ſo much benefit or pleaſure, as to make them think it worth their while to attend them.

It will appear to competent judges, that faithful preachers are called and prepared for their office by the Lord, the head of the church, and not by human inſtitutions, from the following conſiderations.

1. That the goſpel cannot be rightly underſtood but by divine teaching. The natural man, however diſtinguiſhed by abilities or literature, cannot *receive the things of the Spirit of God* ‖; nay, he cannot diſcern them. He may, indeed, know ſomething of the goſpel ſyſtem, conſidered as a matter of ſcience; he

* 2 Tim. iv. 5. † Prov. xi. 30. ‡ Eph. iv. 21. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

he may know how to defend the outworks of Chriſtianity, and be maſter of the external evidences for its truth; and he may eſpouſe orthodox opinions, and be a ſucceſsful champion in the field of controverſy. But the inward power and life, that which conſtitutes the eſſential difference of true religion, is no leſs remote from his apprehenſion, than the idea of light is from a perſon born blind. This he can only learn by experience. The firſt leſſon received and learnt by thoſe who are taught of God, is a conviction of guilt, ignorance, and miſery—and then they begin to learn the importance, neceſſity, and deſign of the goſpel. The man who is thus inſtructed, if the Lord be pleaſed to call him to the office of teaching others, will in due time proceed to deliver to the people what he has himſelf learnt; not with heſitation, uncertainty, or indifference, not what he has acquired by hearſay or from books, *but he has the witneſs in himſelf* *. His heart teacheth his mouth †. He believes, therefore he ſpeaks. He ſimply and freely declares that which he himſelf has known, and ſeen, and taſted of the word of life. And ſpeaking from the fulneſs of his heart, with an earneſtneſs inſpired by the greatneſs and importance of his ſubject, he ſpeaks to the heart and feelings of his hearers, and impreſſes a manifeſtation of the truth upon their minds.

2. That the deſire of preaching this goſpel, when known, if it be a right deſire, muſt likewiſe be given. If a man ſhould attempt the ſervice, without counting the coſt, or conſidering the conſequences, he will moſt probably be diſguſted and wearied. And if he ſeriouſly and properly conſiders beforehand what he is about to engage in, and has a due ſenſe of his own weakneſs, he will tremble at the proſpect, and direct his thoughts to ſome other employment, unleſs his call and ſupport be from on high.

* 1 John v. 10. † Prov. xvi. 23.

high. What courage, wisdom, meekness, and zeal, appear requisite, in the view of such an enquirer, to qualify a man for preaching, and continuing to preach, a doctrine so unpleasing to the world, as the doctrine of the cross has in all ages proved! What opposition, and snares, and difficulties, *what fightings from without, what fears within*, may be expected! Surely he will be ready to shrink back, and to say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* But the Lord, by the constraining sense of his love, and by giving a deep impression of the worth of souls, and by exciting in the mind a dependence upon his all-sufficiency, can and does encourage those whom he calls and chuses, to serve him in the gospel. In themselves they are quite unequal to what is before them, but they obey his voice; they trust in his promises for guidance and protection, and are not disappointed. We are therefore directed to pray, that *the Lord of the harvest would send*, or rather (according to the force of the Greek word) *thrust forth labourers into his harvest* *.

3. That only he who sends forth his ministers can enable them to persevere. It is a service of continual exertion and expence, and requires a continual supply. The opposition of the world, and the power of temptation, acting upon the weakness and depravity of the heart, would quickly prevail against the best ministers, if they were left to carry on the warfare at their own charges. They are at times, yea frequently, in situations and circumstances which teach them feelingly the meaning of the apostle's words, *We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life* †. Besides the trials incidental to the Christian profession, which they are exposed to in common with others, they have many which are peculiar to their calling as preachers of the gospel. Their chief pre-eminence

* Matt. ix. 38. † 2 Cor. i. 8.

over Chriſtians in private life is a painful one; they have the honour of bearing a double ſhare of the heat and burden of the day, and of ſtanding in the foremoſt ranks of the battle, to provoke and receive the fierceſt aſſaults of the enemy. Their only reſource and hope is in the faithfulneſs and compaſſion of their Lord, under whoſe banner and eye they fight, and who has ſaid, *Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*

4. That the Lord only can give ſucceſs to their endeavours. *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,* but there is no *increaſe* unleſs he affords a bleſſing *. It is at leaſt a preſumptive proof, that he has called a man to preach, if he owns his labours, ſince he has not promiſed to own any but thoſe whom he ſends.

We muſt however allow, and obſerve, that to preach ſalvation to others, and even to be inſtrumental in ſaving ſouls, will not abſolutely prove that the preacher is in a ſtate of ſalvation himſelf: we hope it is generally ſo; but there are exceptions and inſtances, which ſhould awaken our circumſpection, and keep us conſtantly looking to the Lord in a ſpirit of humility and dependence. There was a Judas among the apoſtles; and we are aſſured that at the laſt day, ſome, yea many, will plead having done great things in the name of Chriſt, whom he will notwithſtanding diſown, as workers of iniquity †. Even the Apoſtle Paul was impreſſed by this thought, and he has recorded the improvement he made of it for our inſtruction. *I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away* ‡.

* 1 Cor. iii. 6. † Matt. vii. 22, 23. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

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SERMON XXXI.

The Goſpel-Meſſage, glad Tidings.

ROMANS x. 15.

[*As it is written,*] *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the goſpel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

THE account which the Apoſtle Paul gives of his firſt reception among the Galatians *, exemplifies the truth of this paſſage. He found them in a ſtate of ignorance and miſery; alienated from God, and enſlaved to the blind and comfortleſs ſuperſtitions of idolatry. His preaching, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, had a great and marvellous effect. His principal ſubject was the death of Jeſus, who had lately ſuffered as a malefactor at Jeruſalem. Though the tranſaction was paſt, and the ſcene at a conſiderable diſtance, yet by the manner of his repreſentation, the fact was realized to their minds; and they could have been no more affected, had they been actually upon the ſpot at the time. Jeſus Chriſt was exhibited to them as crucified before their eyes †. By the ſame divine energy they were inſtructed in the knowledge of his character, who he was, and why he ſuffered; and likewiſe underſtood their own need of ſuch a Saviour. Thus they hearkened to him, not with the indifference of the Athenians, but with application of all that he ſaid to themſelves. They heard, they believed, and they rejoiced. The apoſtle reminds them, that they had not received a cold ſpe-

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* Gal. iv. 15. † Gal. iii. 1.

culative doctrine, but such a one as imparted a blessedness to them. This, indeed, many of them afterwards lost, when they were unhappily seduced by false teachers. But for a time the knowledge of a Saviour so exactly suited to their circumstances made them happy; and while they were so, they felt very strong emotions of gratitude and esteem for the messenger who brought them these glad tidings. Though he was by many accounted and treated as the offscouring and filth of all things, the Galatians received him as an angel of God, and attended to him, as if the Lord, who sent him, had spoken to them in person. And although he had till then been an entire stranger to them, his message opened a way to their hearts, and they gave him every testimony of the most cordial friendship; insomuch *that, had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.*

Thus, likewise, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, the consequence was great joy in that city *. But when the gospel is thus gladly received, there must be a suitable dispositition of mind. It is sent *to the poor.* It is designed to *heal the broken-hearted, to deliver the captives, and to give sight to the blind* †. And therefore they who are well satisfied with themselves, who say, *We see,* and who boast of their freedom, cannot possibly judge either of the truth or of the importance of the gospel-doctrine. As the Lord waters the earth with a profusion worthy of his magnificence and bounty, and does not confine his rain to cultivated soils; so the good seed of his word often *falls upon the highway, upon the rocks, and among thorns* ‡; but is only productive upon the good ground of an *honest and good heart.* Not that any human heart is truly good by nature, but some are prepared for the reception of the truth. And this preparation is the first effect of the

* Acts viii. 8. † Luke iv. 18. ‡ Luke viii. 13,—15.

the word, when it brings forth fruit unto life eternal. It undeceives those who were for a time deluded with vain hopes, and convinces them that they are poor, and blind, and wretched, and helpless. Then they gladly accept the gospel of peace, and the message is to them as life from the dead.

The passage in the Prophet Isaiah, from which my text is quoted, is very animated and descriptive. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings* *? Imagine a distressed people, at the will and disposal of a conqueror who was justly offended with them, and under an anxious trembling uncertainty how he would treat them: If an authorised messenger should inform them, that, instead of the punishment they deserved, the king vouchsafed them a free pardon, was ready to receive them with favour, and to bestow honours and possessions upon all who applied to him, without excepting the most guilty, even the ringleaders in rebellion: how welcome would this messenger be to them! This, indeed, is beyond the manner of men. No earthly monarch has either magnanimity to make, or power to make good, so gracious and unlimited a proclamation to a whole nation of rebels. But this is the manner of the great God. Such an act of grace is the gospel. An act of grace to sinners, yet founded in righteousness, and displaying the glory of his justice equally with the riches of mercy. For it is founded on the mediation of the Son of his love, and procured by his blood. The messengers of this grace are thus welcomed and honoured by those who believe their report, *and are esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake* †. We may observe,

I. The message of the gospel is *glad tidings* of *peace* and *good things*.

II. The messengers, or preachers, find ample reward in their *success* and *acceptance*.

 I. According

* Is. lii. 7. † 1 Thess. v. 13.

I. According to the Hebrew idiom, (which frequently obtains in the New Teſtament), all good things are compriſed in the term *peace*. They are eminently compriſed in the peace of the goſpel; *for it is the peace of God which paſſeth underſtanding.* It brings a bleſſed aſſurance, that MESSIAH has made peace by the blood of his croſs. They who believe this good report, derive from it peace of conſcience; and are enabled to ſay, *Though thou wert juſtly angry, thine anger is turned away.** It diſpels their fears and forebodings, and inſpires them with liberty to come to God as children; conſequently, on their parts, alienation and enmity ceaſe. They no longer conceive of him as an avenging judge or a hard maſter. They no longer diſpute his authority, nor repine at his appointments. They become a willing people. They yield themſelves to him. They cultivate peace in all their connections. The forgiveneſs and bounty they have received, teaches them likewiſe to forgive, and be kind, as they have opportunity. They poſſeſs ſuch good things as the world can neither give nor take away: Communion with God, grace, wiſdom, and power. They ſerve him with their all, and are ſupported by his good Spirit in every trying circumſtance; and they have a good hope, which enables them to rejoice in tribulation, and to ſmile in death.

If the wickedneſs and obſtinacy of mankind were not ſo ſtrongly deſcribed and exemplified in the Bible, and if we could forget that this obſtinate perverſeneſs was once our own character, we ſhould find it difficult to conceive, after we underſtand the nature and deſign of the goſpel, upon what grounds a ſcheme ſo wiſely and completely adapted to relieve men from miſery, to promote their preſent comfort, and to ſecure their future happineſs, ſhould, inſtead of being received with thankfulneſs, generally excite

* Iſ. xii. 1.

cite contempt and oppoſition. Can the world afford a peace which ſhall abide and cheer the heart under all the changing circumſtances incident to us in this mortal ſtate? Can it propoſe any good, any honours, profit, or pleaſures, worthy of being compared with the honour which cometh from God only, the light of his countenance, and the riches of glory? Can the influence of the world preſerve us from trouble, or ſupport us under it, or deliver us out of it? Has it any charms capable of ſoothing the anguiſh of a wounded conſcience? Can it obviate the ſtroke, or overcome the fear of death? Or can it inſpire the ſoul with confidence and joy, in the contemplation of that approaching day, when we muſt all appear before the tribunal of the ſupreme Judge? That the world, if we poſſeſſed the whole of it, cannot do theſe things for us, is acknowledged by many, and felt by all. The goſpel propoſes a cordial for every care, a balm for every wound; and none who make the experiment of its efficacy are diſappointed. In other caſes, they who have received great obligations may ſpeak highly of their benefactor; and they who, beyond hope, have been recovered from a dangerous malady, may commend the ſkill and care of their phyſician, to thoſe who are labouring under the ſame diſeaſe, without giving offence. But if they who have obtained life and peace by believing in Jeſus, proclaim his goodneſs, and point him out to their fellow-ſinners as the only Phyſician and Saviour of ſouls, their teſtimony is charged with folly, and their endeavours rejected with ſcorn, as officious and impertinent. Men, while left to themſelves, will not come to him that they may have life. The God of this world ſo works upon their prejudices, pride, and paſſions, that though the light of truth ſhines around them like the light of the ſun, the eyes of their mind are blinded, and they are pleaſed with their darkneſs, and unwil-

ling to ſee *. Hence of the few, comparatively, who are favoured with a clear and faithful diſpenſation of the goſpel, the greater part, it is to be feared, reject the counſel of God againſt themſelves; and his miniſters, in all ages, have had cauſe to adopt the prophet's complaint, Lord, *who hath believed our report* †? It would be thus univerſally, if the Lord, who gave the word, and who ſends forth the preachers, had not engaged his promiſe, that they ſhall not labour wholly in vain, nor ſpend their ſtrength for nought. He prepares a people to ſerve him, and to ſhew forth his praiſe. And while ſome mock, others refuſe to hear ‡, and others, with an indolent indifference, are content to hear again and again, there are others whoſe hearts are opened to receive the truth in the love of it. They hear and believe to everlaſting life.

II. The inſtruments of this happy change find their reward in their work. In being owned to the ſalvation of a few, they are compenſated for all the oppoſition they meet with from the many; and this on a twofold account.

Firſt, and principally, *for the love they bear to their Lord, and to ſouls for his ſake.*

To ſee his name made precious to the hearts of ſinners; to ſee thoſe who were blind admiring his excellency; to ſee thoſe who were ſo far off from God brought ſo nigh; to ſee thoſe who were wretched rejoicing in his goodneſs; to hear thoſe whoſe lips were filled with folly, falſehood, or blaſphemy, proclaiming his praiſe; ſuch ſalutary effects of their miniſtry fill *them* likewiſe with praiſe and joy: and when their hearers expreſs the power and ſpirit of the goſpel in their tempers and conduct, they can ſay, *Now we live, if you ſtand faſt in the Lord* ‖.

A

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.
† Iſ. liii. 1.
‡ Acts xvii. 32.
‖ 1 Theſſ. iii. 8.

A ſecondary ſatisfaction, which of itſelf is ſufficient to make them full amends for all the ſcorn of an unkind world, is *the ſhare they have in the affections of the people* who are thus benefited by their miniſtry. This is the popularity which alone is deſirable. It would be a ſmall thing to be able merely to hold a multitude by the ears; but to be approved and loved by thoſe to whom the Lord has made them uſeful, is a high honour, and a ſource of ſublime pleaſure. When Peter and John * had healed the lame man, I doubt not but they were more affected by the ſimple honeſt teſtimony of his gratitude, than by the unmeaning wonder of all the ſurrounding multitude. If a true ſervant of the Lord, by any advantage of abilities or elocution, ſhould attach a large congregation to a perſonal regard for himſelf, ſhould be admired and beloved by them, and yet diſcover no attachment in them to the Saviour whom he preaches, their partiality to him would give him but little pleaſure. He would be more ready to weep over them, than to rejoice in the preference they gave him. For he ſeeks not their applauſe, but their edification; and he aims not to promote his own glory, but the glory of him who ſent him †. He is, indeed, glad to ſee them attending upon the means which God has promiſed to bleſs. But the faithfulneſs and cloſeneſs of his addreſſes to their conſciences, by which many are ſooner or later diſguſted and driven away, is a proof that he does not want them merely to make up a number about him. They who make the office of a preacher an occaſion whereby to promote their own intereſt or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they ſeek; but it is ſuch a reward as can only ſatisfy a weak and mercenary mind; and from him, whoſe name they proſtitute, they can only expect the reward aſſigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.

* Acts iii. 8. † John vii. 18.

But true Christians will, and do, set a high value upon the ministers who, with simplicity and godly sincerity, preach the gospel of peace, in such a manner as to evidence that they are influenced by a regard to the glory of God, and to the good of souls; and they give proof of their affection in more ways than by speaking well of them.

1. By the satisfaction with which they accept a faithful ministry, as a balance to the trials they meet with in common life. There are many poor, and many afflicted people, who have little comfort in the things of this life, and in their own houses. Some are pinched by penury, and some who live in opulence, yet dwell, as the Psalmist expresses it *, in the fire, and among lions. They suffer not less than the others, though in a different way, from the unkindness and opposition of their nearest connections. But in the house of God, they are satisfied and comforted. And, according to the words of the prophet, though the Lord is pleased to give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction †, yet, since their teachers are not removed into corners, but they have free access to the preaching of his word, and can attend upon a minister who careth for their souls, and meets them, when they are weary, *with a word in season*, they bear their appointed cross with cheerfulness. Though they have much bitterness of heart at home, known only to themselves, they have a pleasure which a stranger intermeddleth not with, when they go up to the house of the Lord. But if the instrument, who is the messenger of God to them for good, be removed, and they are deprived of these opportunities, the regard they bore him is manifested by their sorrow for losing him; which often affects them more sensibly than all their other griefs.

2. By taking kindly and in good part his most searching

* Psal. lvii. 4. † Is. xxx. 20.

ſearching diſcourſes in public, or even his reproofs and admonitions in private, if needful. For they know that he watches over their ſouls, as one who muſt give an account *. And becauſe they love him, they do all in their power to make the ſervice a pleaſure, and not a grief to him. They do not wiſh him to ſpeak ſmooth things to them, or to entertain them with the diſcuſſion of points in which they have little concern, but to hear that which is ſuitable to their own caſe and circumſtances. And if the preacher diſcovers to them, that through inadvertence, they have allowed themſelves in any wrong practice, or have lived in the omiſſion of any duty, inſtead of being offended with his plain dealing, they love him the better for it.

3. By their tenderneſs and ſympathy with him in all his exerciſes; and by their care, according to their ability, to make his ſituation comfortable, and to avoid every thing that might give him juſt occaſion for complaint or grief. The trials of a faithful miniſter are neither few nor ſmall. His work is great; he is ſure to meet with enemies and diſcouragements. He travels in birth for ſouls †; he is pained by the oppoſition of the wicked, the inconſtancy of the wavering, and the inconſiſtency of many who make profeſſion of the truth. He feels many anxieties for thoſe who are enquiring the way to the kingdom, leſt they ſhould be turned aſide and hindered; and too often the hopes he had indulged, of ſome who diſcovered a concern for religion, are diſappointed. His inward conflicts are many. He often walks in much weakneſs, fear, and trembling ‡. When he conſiders what he is, what he ought to be, and what he has to do, he is often diſtreſſed, afraid, and aſhamed, and unable to ſpeak. His path is ſpread with ſnares, his heart wounded with temptations. But his judicious hearers have ſome knowledge

* Heb. xiii. 17. † Gal. iv. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 3.

ledge of what he endures for their sakes and in their service; they love him, pity him, and pray for him, and their kind attention comforts him under all his tribulations.

Sometimes their regard is rather improperly expressed; as when they not only value his ministry, but hold him so highly a favourite, that they can hardly hear another. A preference is certainly due to the person who is made especially useful; but no faithful preacher should be slighted. Though gifts and abilities are not equal in all, yet they are all the Lord's messengers, and entitled to regard.

Again, it is an improper regard, if they yield themselves implicitly to him, to be governed by his will. So far as we speak agreeably to the scripture, which is the rule and standard of faith and practice both to you and to us, we are authorised to require your attention and obedience; but you are not bound to receive what we propose merely upon our own authority. There are those who account ignorance the mother of devotion, and expect an implicit compliance with their injunctions, by virtue of their office and personal influence. But a true minister will account it his honour and pleasure to preach to an enlightened people, who love and study the Bible, and, like the Bereans, search the scripture *, to see if things are so as represented. *We have no dominion over your faith, but wish to be helpers of your joy* †. Nor do we pretend to dominion over your purses, though we are to remind you of the apostle's charge, *To do good, and to communicate, forget not* ‡.

How much are they to be pitied, who account that word of grace a burden, which to those who receive it with thankfulness, proves the balm and cordial of life! *Take heed how you hear.* If the gospel is not made to you a savour of life, it will be a savour

* Acts xvii. 11. † 2 Cor. i. 24. ‡ Heb. xiii. 16.

favour of death. It will aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and leave you utterly hopeleſs and inexcuſeable. If you continue impenitent and obſtinate, the hour is coming, when you will wiſh you had never heard of the name of Jeſus. It had been better for you never to have been born, or to have lived and died among the ſavage Indians, or to have been an idiot or a lunatic to the end of your days, than to have lived where the doctrine of ſalvation was publiſhed in your hearing, if you finally reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves!

SERMON XXXII.

The Progreſs of the Goſpel.

ROMANS x. 18.

——*Their ſound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*

THE heavens declare the glory of God *. The grandeur of the arch over our heads, the number and luſtre of the ſtars, the beauty of the light, the ſplendor of the ſun, the regular ſucceſſion of day and night, and of the ſeaſons of the year, are ſuch proofs of infinite wiſdom and power, that the ſcripture attributes to them a voice, a univerſal language, intelligible to all mankind, accommodated to every capacity. There is no ſpeech nor language, where their voice is not heard. The combined effect of the viſible works of the great Architect, preſſes a declaration upon the ear of reaſon—*The hand that made us is divine.* We muſt, however, underſtand it of the ear of right reaſon. The loudeſt voice is unnoticed by the deaf. Thus it ought to be, and thus it would be, if man were indeed a rational creature, as he proudly boaſts himſelf. That the fact in general is otherwiſe; that the bulk of mankind are no more affected by the works of God, than the beaſts of the field; that the philoſophers who profeſs to ſtudy them, ſo faintly diſcern, ſo frequently deny, the great firſt Cauſe of all, is a proof that ſin has darkened and depraved the nobleſt powers of the ſoul, and degraded man into the ſtate of an inattentive idiot. However the evidence, if it does not excite his admiration and praiſe, is

* Pſ. xix. 1.

is abundantly ſufficient to convict him of ſtupidity and ingratitude, and to leave him without excuſe *.

This paſſage, taken from that ſublime ode of David, the nineteenth Pſalm, is applied by the apoſtle to illuſtrate the character, and the progreſs of the ſtill more wonderful diſplay of the divine perfections, which God has made known by the glorious goſpel. A variety of truths ſhine (like ſtars in the firmament) in the ſyſtem of revelation. But principally Jeſus, the Sun of truth and righteouſneſs, the ſource of ſpiritual light and life, anſwers to the deſcription there given of the material ſun. *His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from his heat* †.

But the fulfilment of the promiſes reſpecting MESSIAH's kingdom is progreſſive. So far as this prophecy has been accompliſhed, the arm of the Lord has been revealed. It is his doing, and may juſtly be marvellous in our eyes. The truth of the prophecy will be proved by its final completion; which, though not likely to take place in our time, we may be aſſured that it cannot fail, for the Lord hath ſpoken it. And beſides, we have a ſufficient pledge and ſecurity for the whole, in what he has already done. It was not neceſſary for the fulfilling of this prophecy, nor conſiſtent with the tenor of many other prophecies, that the ſpread of the goſpel ſhould be inſtantaneous and univerſal on its firſt publication. MESSIAH is to rule in the midſt of his enemies, till the appointed ſeaſon, when all enemies ſhall be ſubdued under his feet. The goſpel, the rod of his power, is ſo admirably adapted to the neceſſities of mankind, that the obſtructions it has met with muſt be aſcribed to their wickedneſs and obſtinacy. Not that they could reſiſt the will of God. Had he intended to give it univerſal ſucceſs from the beginning, the event would have been anſwerable. But it was his pleaſure to conduct

* Rom. i. 20. † Pſ. xix. 6.

conduct the diſpenſation of it, ſo as, on the one hand, to diſplay his ſovereignty, wiſdom, and power, and on the other, to afford a full proof of the depravity and alienation of the heart of man. This point is ſo much miſunderſtood and miſrepreſented, that, though it is attended with great difficulties, eſpecially if we give way to vain reaſonings upon it, I ſhall venture, in the preſent diſcourſe, to offer a few thoughts towards clearing the ſubject, and vindicating (if the very attempt be not preſumptuous) the ways of God to man.

When the Sun of righteouſneſs, after a long night of darkneſs, aroſe upon the world, there appeared a ſtrong probability that the prophecies concerning the extent of his vital influence, from eaſt to weſt, from pole to pole, would ſoon be completely realized. In a very ſhort ſpace he was known and adored by multitudes, through the greateſt part of the Roman empire, and beyond its limits. But, perhaps, for about ſeventeen hundred years ſince that period, the boundaries of his kingdom, though they have been altered, have not been much enlarged. If he has ſince in ſome meaſure enlightened the more weſtern parts of the globe, the eaſtern regions, which once rejoiced in his light, are now overwhelmed with groſs Mahommedan darkneſs. And if we were capable of inveſtigating the ſtate of the world at this day, we ſhould probably find, that five out of ſix of the human race now living, never ſo much as heard of the name of Jeſus as a Saviour. There is reaſon to fear likewiſe, that in the nations who profeſſedly call him Lord, and are not unwilling to be themſelves called Chriſtians, a greater proportion than of five out of ſix, are no leſs ſtrangers to his power and grace, than the Mahommedans who reject him, or the heathens who never heard of him.

There is not perhaps a darker chapter in the book of divine providence, nor a meditation which calls for a more abſolute ſubjection and ſubmiſſion

to

to the holy will and unſearchable wiſdom of God, than this. The firſt ſpread of the goſpel proved it to be a divine expedient, fully capable of producing all the great purpoſes which the prophets had foretold, and which the ſtate of the world required. It reconciled men to God, to themſelves, and to each other. It ſubdued their paſſions, regulated their affections, freed them from the guilt and bondage of ſin, from the love of the world, and from the fear of death. Wherever the doctrine of the croſs was preached, it produced that ſalutary change of conduct which philoſophy had long attempted in vain; and raiſed men to that life of communion with God, of which philoſophers had no conception. Such was the bright morning of the goſpel-day. But in time, yea, in a little time, dark clouds obſcured its light, its progreſs was impeded, and in a manner ſtopped. On one hand, the profeſſion and name of the goſpel gave occaſion to miſchiefs and abominations which had been unknown among the heathens; ſo that the part of the world which received the name of Chriſtendom, was little diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, in a religious view, but by a fierce and rancorous ſuperſtition, which tyrannized over the conſciences, liberties, and the lives of men. On the other hand, as I have obſerved, the very name of Chriſtianity was reſtrained to a ſmall portion of the earth; many nations have not heard of it to this day; and many who once profeſſed it have renounced it long ago.

Thus the fact ſtands. We cannot deny it. But how ſhall we account for it? Infidels and petty reaſoners think they here find an invincible objection againſt the truth. They ſay, "If the goſpel you "ſpeak of be ſo ſalutary and neceſſary, if it be indeed "the greateſt effect of the divine goodneſs, why has "not God, who is the common Father of mankind, "afforded it to all the nations of the earth? and why "is it reſtrained to ſo few?" But I think we may retort the queſtion, and let them who propoſe it give ſuch.

ſuch an anſwer (if they can) as ſhall not amount to a confeſſion of the obſtinacy and ungrateful folly of mankind. When the world ſaw the happy tendency and effects of this goſpel in the age of the apoſtles, why did they not univerſally receive it? We know that when the uſe of the mariner's compaſs, the art of printing, and many other inventions that might be named, were diſcovered in one country, they were preſently adopted by the ſurrounding civilized nations. Even the recent attempts to venture through the air with a balloon, hazardous as they certainly are, and inſignificant with reſpect to real uſefulneſs, are likely in a little time not only to engage the notice, but to excite the imitation, of Europe. Why then was the goſpel, the moſt beneficial and important diſcovery the world has been favoured with, the only one that has been treated with general contempt? Certainly our Lord has aſſigned the true reaſon, *Light is come into the world, but men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil* *. They hate the light, they will not come to it, nor will they permit it to come to them if they can poſſibly prevent it. This glorious goſpel of the bleſſed God has been and ſtill is ſhunned and dreaded, and every human precaution and exertion has been employed to withſtand and ſuppreſs it, as though, like the peſtilence, it was baneful to the welfare of ſociety. May we not ſay, ſpeaking after the manner of men, that the Lord has done enough to confirm his own expreſs and ſolemn declaration, that he *has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live* †! He has raiſed up a ſucceſſion of faithful ſervants, from age to age, to publiſh theſe glad tidings. The reception they have met with, not only from the heathens, but from nominal Chriſtians, is well known to thoſe who are acquainted with eccleſiaſtical hiſtory; which contains little more than a detail

* John iii. 19. † Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

detail of the arts and cruelties by which the civil and eccleſiaſtical powers of almoſt every kingdom where the goſpel has been known have endeavoured to ſuppreſs it.

The nation of Great Britain, in particular, has but little right to aſk, Why the goſpel of Chriſt has been ſpread no farther among the heathen? The providence of God has favoured us with peculiar advantages for this ſervice. Our arms and commerce have opened us a way to the moſt diſtant parts of the globe; and of late years, the enterpriſing ſpirit of our navigators has added almoſt a new world to the diſcoveries of former times. How far have our plans been formed with a ſubſerviency to the great deſign of evangeliſing the heathen? How much have we done to promote it in Aſia, where our influence and opportunities have been the greateſt? What impreſſion of the name and ſpirit of Chriſtianity has our conduct given to the inhabitants of India? But I forbear—Facts are too well known to need recital; too glaring to need a comment. It is true, we have an incorporated ſociety for propagating the goſpel in foreign parts, and we hear of miſſionaries; but of the good effects of their miſſions, as at preſent conducted, we neither hear, nor expect to hear. While America was ours, the efforts of a few individuals from the northern provinces in the laſt and preſent century, were not without ſucceſs. But I fear this is all the honour we can claim. Some good has been done by the Daniſh miſſion to Tranquebar; but I believe our influence in it has been rather nominal than effective. The extent and effects of the labours of the *Unitas Fratrum* *, compared with their circumſtances and reſources, muſt not be omitted on this occaſion. They doubtleſs excite admiration, and thankfulneſs to God, in every ſerious mind acquainted.

* More generally known amongſt us by the name of the Brethren, or Moravians.

ed with the ſubject. But excepting in theſe inſtances, I believe the heathens have derived but little knowledge of the goſpel, from their connections with Chriſtendom, for ſome ages paſt. And I think none of the commercial nations in Europe have had the propagation of Chriſtianity leſs at heart than the Engliſh. What obligations the natives of Africa are under to us, for inſtruction or example, may be eſtimated, in part, by a curſory ſurvey of the ſtate of our Weſt-India iſlands.

That the goſpel is ſo little known in the world, and ſo little received where it is known, cannot be ſo properly aſcribed to the will of God, as to the wickedneſs and wilfulneſs of men. Undoubtedly he to whom all things are poſſible, who has abſolute power over the hearts of his creatures, could make a way for the univerſal reception of it. And we truſt that in his own time he will do ſo. But *power* is not his only attribute. It would be raſh and abſurd to ſuppoſe that the great God *will* do every thing that he *can* do. We are ſure that he will do what is worthy of himſelf; but of this his own infinite wiſdom is the only competent judge. What is becoming of his perfections and holy government, we can know no farther than he is pleaſed to inform us. But it certainly becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the duſt, when we contemplate his conduct; or, if we do ſpeak, to adopt the Apoſtle's language, *Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever* *.

However, my text is fulfilling, and ſhall be fulfilled. This joyful ſound has already been ſpread far abroad, in defiance of all attempts to reſtrain it. Multitudes from age to age have heard it, and found it

* Rom. xi. 36.

it to be the power of God unto ſalvation. And it would be eaſy to prove, if it belonged to my ſubject, that the ſuperior advantages of civilization which Chriſtendom enjoys are remotely owing to the knowledge of revelation. To this muſt be chiefly aſcribed the different ſtate of this iſland from what it was when viſited by Julius Cæſar. Yea, our modern philoſophers would make but a poor figure, were they deſpoiled of all the plumes they have borrowed from the book they affect to deſpiſe. Farther, the purpoſe of God to ſave ſinners by faith in his beloved Son, is the primary ground of that patience and long-ſuffering which he ſtill exerciſes towards ſuch a world as this. And ſome imperfect traces of this deſign, tranſmitted by tradition, are probably to be found, though wofully disfigured, among every nation and people under heaven: which have at leaſt preſerved, in a degree, the notices of right and wrong, and ſome faint warnings of conſcience, in the moſt ſavage ſtate of human nature. But, were it not for reaſons connected with the deſigns of his mercy, we can ſcarcely conceive that the Holy God would have perpetuated the race of mankind in a ſtate of rebellion and enmity againſt his government. Or if he had permitted them to multiply, and left them wholly and abſolutely to themſelves, without interpoſing ſome reſtraints upon their depravity, I believe the inhabitants of the earth would have been no better than incarnate fiends.

The prophecies, both of the Old and New Teſtament, encourage us to hope for a time, when the light of goſpel-truth will break forth with meridian brightneſs, the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee his ſalvation. As a pledge of this, and of the truth of the whole ſcripture, we have what may be called a ſtanding miracle continually before our eyes; I mean the ſtate of the Jews, who, though diſperſed far and wide among many nations, are every where preſerved a diſtinct and ſeparate

parate people. The hiſtory of the world affords no other inſtance of the like kind. The great monarchies, by which they were ſucceſſively conquered and ſcattered, have ſucceſſively periſhed. Only the names of them remain. But the people whom they deſpiſed, and endeavoured to exterminate, ſubſiſt to this day; and though ſifted like corn over the earth, and *apparently* forſaken of God, are ſtill preſerved by his wonderful providence, unaffected by the changes and cuſtoms around them; ſtill tenacious of the law of Moſes, though the obſervance of it is rendered impracticable. Many days, many ages they have lived, as the prophets foretold they ſhould, without a temple, without ſacrifice or prieſt *. As yet, many heathen nations are permitted to walk in their own ways. But at length *the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in, and all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved* †. The revolutions and commotions in kingdoms and nations, which aſtoniſh and perplex politicians, are all bringing forward this great event. The plan of the human drama, to us, who only ſee a ſingle ſcene, is dark and intricate; but the cataſtrophe is approaching; and in the cloſe of the whole, the manifold wiſdom of God will be admired and adored, and all holy and happy intelligences will acknowledge with tranſport, *He has done all things well*

But the point I am chiefly to preſs upon my hearers, is, that this word of ſalvation is ſent to you ‡. How the great Judge will deal with the heathens, who were never favoured with it, he has not ſeen fit diſtinctly to inform us. But thus far he has aſſured us, that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for thoſe who have the privilege of knowing the goſpel, if they reject it ‖. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Do not think miniſters

* Hoſ. iii. 4, 5. † Rom. xi. 25, 26. ‡ Acts xiii. 26.
‖ Matt. xi. 20,—24.

miniſters aſſuming if they magnify their office. We have no reaſon to think highly of ourſelves. Nor would you be blameable for diſregarding us if we ſpoke in our own names. But if we preach the truth of the goſpel in ſimplicity and ſincerity, then we ſpeak in the name of the Lord, and demand your attention. Do you aſk for our authority and commiſſion? Aſk your own conſciences. If, like Felix, when you mean only to indulge your curioſity by hearing us, you are conſtrained to tremble*; if we force upon your mind the remembrance of what you have ſaid or done; if our meſſage makes you uneaſy and diſſatisfied with yourſelves; if you cannot avoid feeling at ſome times the truth of our principles, and the neceſſity of the change we would preſs upon you; if, though you have been repeatedly diſpleaſed and offended with what you hear, and, perhaps, have gone away purpoſing or threatening that you would hear it no more, you ſtill appear amongſt us—then you have a ſufficient proof, that the miniſters are ſent and authoriſed to ſpeak to you, and we take your conſciences to witneſs that we preach the truth.

* Acts xxiv. 25.

SER-

SERMON XXXIII.

Oppoſition to Meſſiah unreaſonable.

PSALM ii. 1,—3.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel together, againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed; ſaying, Let us break his bonds aſunder, and caſt away his cords from us.

IT is generally admitted, that the inſtitutes of Chriſtianity, as contained in the New Teſtament, do at leaſt exhibit a beautiful and ſalutary ſyſtem of morals; and that a ſincere compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his Apoſtles would have a good effect upon ſociety. Few infidels have ventured to contradict the common ſenſe of mankind ſo far as to deny this. Nor can it be denied, that the author of this inſtitution, if we judge by the hiſtory and character given of him by the evangeliſts, exemplified, in the higheſt perfection, by his own conduct, the precepts which he enjoined to his followers. While he lived as a man amongſt men, the tenor of his behaviour was ſuch as became the friend of mankind. Though he ſubmitted to a low eſtate, and often ſuffered hunger, thirſt, and wearineſs, we do not read of his having wrought a ſingle miracle merely for his own relief. But the wants and calamities of others continually excited his compaſſion and engaged his aſſiſtance. He gave ſight to the blind, health to the ſick, and ſometimes wiped away the tears of mourners,

mourners, by reſtoring their dead to life. He endured hunger himſelf; but once and again provided food for multitudes, leſt they, having nothing to eat, ſhould faint by the way. Nor did he confine his acts of benevolence to his followers, but was eaſy of acceſs, and granted the requeſt of all indiſcriminately who applied to him. *He went about doing good* *, and often put himſelf in the way of thoſe who would not otherwiſe have known him. And though he was oppoſed, calumniated, and laughed to ſcorn, he continued unwearied and determined in the ſame cauſe, beſtowing benefits on all around him, as occaſions offered, and returning good for evil. May we not with reaſon aſk, Why then did Jews and Heathens, prieſts and people, ſcribes and Sadducees, rage ſo furiouſly againſt him, who did nothing amiſs, who did all things well? Why did perſons of the moſt oppoſite intereſts, parties, and ſentiments, who could agree in nothing elſe, ſo cordially agree in oppoſing MESSIAH?

His goſpel breathes the ſpirit of the great Author, and has a direct tendency to make men happy and uſeful. Wherever it was publiſhed, in the firſt age, among the Heathens, many of them turned from the worſhip of dumb idols, to ſerve the living and true God. It taught and enabled them to renounce *ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly* †; and it ſtill produces the ſame effects. The world now bears the name of Chriſtian; but under this new and honourable name it retains the ſame ſpirit as formerly. Many who are called Chriſtian, are no leſs under the power of evil tempers and evil habits, than the heathens to whom the apoſtles preached. But where the goſpel of the grace of God reaches the heart, a real and obſervable change is produced. The profane perſon learns to fear an oath, the libertine is reclaimed, the drun-

* Acts x. 38. † Titus ii. 12.

kard becomes ſober, and the miſer kind. Wherever the truth of the goſpel is known and received, inſtances may be found of perſons who were a terror and a burden to their families, being delivered from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience, from the dominion of headſtrong paſſions, from the ſlavery of habitual wickedneſs, and made peaceful, uſeful, and exemplary members of ſociety, by what the apoſtle calls the preaching of the croſs. And we challenge hiſtory to ſhew, that an abiding, conſiſtent reformation, was ever effected by any other doctrine, in a ſingle province, or city, or village, or even in a ſingle family.

What then ſhall we ſay of that zeal which kindled the fire of perſecution againſt our Lord and his apoſtles, and his followers, through a ſucceſſion of ages? What is the common principle, the bond of union, which at this day connects people who differ ſo widely in other reſpects, and points their diſpleaſure from all ſides againſt this one object? In a former diſcourſe, [Ser. 17.] I briefly mentioned the principal grounds of that diſlike which the Jews manifeſted to MESSIAH'S perſonal miniſtry; and I obſerved, that they are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man, and therefore not peculiar to any one age or nation. The goſpel always did, and always will, produce the ſame happy change in thoſe who receive it; and provoke the ſame oppoſition and reſentment in thoſe who do not. The actings will be different as circumſtances vary, but the principle is univerſally the ſame. In this iſland, which the good providence of God has diſtinguiſhed by many ſignal and peculiar favours, the ſpirit of our conſtitution and government is friendly to liberty of conſcience and the rights of private judgment; ſo that our religious profeſſion does not expoſe us to the penalties of fire and ſword, ſtripes or tortures, impriſonment or baniſhment. Such trials have been the lot of our forefathers;

forefathers; when the ſervants of God, under the names of *Goſpellers* or *Puritans*, were treated as heretics of the worſt ſort. We are bound to acknowledge with thankfulneſs the bleſſings of religious and civil liberty which we enjoy. But the world at large around us is not more favourably diſpoſed to the grace and rule of MESSIAH's kingdom, than it was in the days of Heathen and Popiſh darkneſs. The tongue at leaſt is unreſtrained, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will ſpeak. The goſpel offends the pride of men, by conſidering them all on a level, as ſinners in the ſight of God; and by propoſing only one method of ſalvation, without admitting any difference of plea or character. It offends them likewiſe by its ſtrictneſs. Like Herod, they might perhaps conſent to do many things *, if they were left at liberty to pleaſe themſelves in others, in which, though expreſsly contrary to the will of God, they will not ſubmit to be controlled; and therefore they are much diſpleaſed with the goſpel, which, by affording no allowance or connivance to the leaſt known ſin, but preſcribing a rule of univerſal holineſs, croſſes their inclinations and favourite intereſts. When Paul preached at Epheſus, Demetrius and his companions perceived that their craft was in danger. This was the real cauſe of their anger, but they were aſhamed to avow it; and therefore their oſtenſible reaſon for oppoſing him was of a religious kind † and they profeſſed a great concern for the honour of Diana. Few perhaps would have given themſelves much trouble to promote or preſerve the gain of the craftſmen; but a pretended regard for the worſhip which had been long eſtabliſhed, was a popular topic, which wrought powerfully upon the ſuperſtition of the ignorant multitude, and thouſands were preſently induced to join with them in the cry, *Great is Diana of the Epheſians.*

* Mark vi. 20. † Acts xix. 28.

The like arts are ſtill practiſed with the like ſucceſs. The ſame ſecret motives are diſguiſed by the ſame plauſible pretences. The deceitfulneſs and wickedneſs of the heart appears in no one inſtance more plainly than in the cavils which are repeated and multiplied againſt the grace of the goſpel. When we preach a free ſalvation by faith in Jeſus, and propoſe his obedience unto death, as the ſure and only ground of acceptance with God; when we ſay, in the words of the apoſtle, to the vileſt of ſinners who feel the burden, and fear the conſequences of their ſins, *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved* *, an alarm is raiſed, and a concern pretended for the intereſts of morality. The doctrine of *ſalvation by faith only*, is charged with opening a door, a flood-gate for licentiouſneſs; and it is ſuppoſed, that if this doctrine be true, people may live as they pleaſe, and ſtill comfort themſelves with the expectation of heaven at laſt. Conſidering our natural propenſity to truſt in ourſelves that we are righteous, I do not wonder that perſons who are comparatively ſober and decent ſhould ſpeak thus, while they are ignorant of the ſtrictneſs of the holy law of God, and of the depravity of their own hearts. But I ſometimes wonder that they are not a little diſconcerted, by the characters of many (ſo different from what they ſuppoſe their own to be) who join with them in the objections they make. For in this point, with the ſober and decent, the licentious and profligate readily concur; and whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and profane ſwearers, almoſt equal them in gravely expreſſing their apprehenſions, that the doctrine of ſalvation by grace will prove very unfavourable to the practice of good works. How very remarkable is this—that the virtuous and the vile, the moſt reſpectable and the moſt infamous people, ſhould ſo frequently agree in ſentiment, and unite in oppoſing

* Acts xvi. 31.

oppoſing the goſpel, profeſſedly from the ſame motive. But thus it was at the commencement of MESSIAH's kingdom, kings, rulers, prieſts, and people, all conſpired and raged againſt him. Herod and Pilate, the Jewiſh elders and the Roman ſoldiers, the Phariſees and the Sadducees, thus differed, and thus agreed. They hated each other till he appeared; but their greater common hatred to him made them act in concert, and they ſuſpended their mutual animoſity, that they might combine to deſtroy him.

I may ſeem to have digreſſed from the immediate ſcope of my text, but I judge it proper to bring the ſubject home to ourſelves. If I confined myſelf to prove that the enemies of our Lord, when he was upon earth, were very unreaſonable and unjuſt in treating him as they did, I ſhould have an eaſy taſk, and, I ſuppoſe, the ready aſſent of all my hearers. But there may be perſons preſent, who, though they little ſuſpect themſelves, are equally miſled by prejudices; and under a ſemblance of zeal for a form of godlineſs, oppoſe the truth and power of it, upon the ſame principles and in the ſame ſpirit as the Jews and Heathens did of old. The Jews who condemned MESSIAH to death, blamed their forefathers, for perſecuting the prophets who foretold his appearance *; but their own conduct towards him was a proof, that had they lived in the days of the prophets, they would have acted as their fathers had done. So the reſentment that many, who bear the Chriſtian name in this day, diſcover againſt the doctrines of the goſpel, and againſt the people who profeſs them, is a proof that they would have concurred with thoſe who crucified the Lord of glory, had they lived in Jeruſalem at that time.

In this prophecy, David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, ſpeaks of the future as actually preſent. He ſaw the reſiſtance that would be made to

* Matt. xxiii. 30-31.

the perſon and kingdom of MESSIAH by the powers of the world; that they would employ their force and policy to withſtand and ſuppreſs the decree and appointment of God. The queſtion, Why? implies that their oppoſition would be both groundleſs and ineffectual.

1. It *was entirely groundleſs and unreaſonable.* MESSIAH was indeed a King, and he came to ſet up a kingdom that ſhould endure for ever But his kingdom is not of this world; and, if rightly underſtood, would give no umbrage to human governments. It does not interfere with the rights of princes. His ſubjects are indeed primarily bound by the laws of their immediate King, and they muſt *obey God rather than man* *, if man will preſume to enjoin ſuch laws as contradict his known will. But with this exception, it is a part of the duty they owe to their Lord, to obey thoſe whom he has placed, by his providence, in authority over them. The kingdom of MESSIAH has little to do with what we call politics. His people are taught *to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's* †, and to yield a peaceful ſubjection to the powers that be, under whatever form of government their lot may be caſt. They *are ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth* ‡, their citizenſhip, treaſures, and converſation, are in heaven; and they have no more direct concern with the intrigues and parties of politicians, than a traveller has in the feuds and diſturbances which may happen in a foreign country through which he is paſſing. They are to obey God, they are to obey kings and governors in ſubordination to God, they are to render to all their due; *tribute to whom tribute, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, honour to whom honour* ‖. But where they cannot comply with the laws of government without breaking the laws of God, then they are not to obey, but to ſuffer patiently, committing their

* Acts v. 29. † Matt. xxii. 21. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 11. ‖ Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

their cauſe to him whom they ſerve; well knowing that he is able to protect or relieve them, ſo far as his wiſdom judges it fit, and to make them abundant amends for all they can ſuffer for his ſake. I am not a direct advocate for the doctrines of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance in the largeſt ſenſe. I ſet a great value upon the bleſſings of civil and religious liberty, I reverence the conſtitutional rights of nations, particularly of our own. But they are all dependant upon the will of our Lord; and I know not by what means they can be preſerved to a people, when their ſins have made them ripe for judgment. But *let the dead bury their dead* *. God will never want inſtruments, when it is his pleaſure to relieve the oppreſſed, or to abaſe the proud. For theſe purpoſes, he over-rules the counſels and affairs of men, pours contempt upon the deſigns of princes, and takes the wiſe in their own craftineſs. The ſubjects of his ſpiritual kingdom have only to commit their cauſe to him, to wait upon him, to obſerve and to admire his management. Their beſt intereſt is always ſafe. And even the troubles they meet with, are appointed for their good. But if they ſo far conform to the world, as to take an active and decided part in the diſputes and contentions around them, they uſually diſhonour their Chriſtian character, and obſtruct their own peace and comfort. There may poſſibly be ſome exceptions. God may ſometimes place a ſervant of his, by the leading of his providence, in a poſt of high political importance, as he did Joſeph and Daniel, but I believe ſuch inſtances are few; and if any venture of their own accord beyond the proper line of their calling as Chriſtians, the event is uſually grief and loſs to them. They are deſcribed in his word, as thoſe *who are quiet in the land* †, and ſuch ſhould be their deportment.

* Matt. viii. 22.

† Pſal. xxxv. 20.

We are ſure it was thus, in the firſt and golden days of Chriſtianity. The Roman government was then abſolute, arbitrary, and oppreſſive. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and others, who preſided over it, and bore the name of Roman emperors, were beyond meaſure vile and abominable: one of them was, by a decree of the Roman ſenate, ſentenced to death as a public enemy to mankind—but the Chriſtians neither diſputed their right, nor diſobeyed their authority. Kings and rulers, therefore, have nothing to fear from the goſpel of Chriſt. The maxims of ſound policy would engage all their influence in facilitating its progreſs, for true Chriſtians will aſſuredly be good ſubjects. Impatience of ſubordination, contempt of lawful authority, tumults, riots, and conſpiracies, are evils which would have no place if the goſpel was generally received. But princes have been uſually expoſed to the flattery of deſigning men, who, by their arts and miſrepreſentations, have ſeduced them to act contrary to their true intereſts. Their miſtaken efforts to ſuppreſs that cauſe, which, if maintained, would have been the beſt ſecurity of their thrones, have often ſtained the annals of their reign with innocent blood, and filled their dominions with miſery. Hiſtory furniſhes many inſtances of kings, who might otherwiſe have lived beloved and died lamented, that have involved themſelves and their families in the calamities with which they unjuſtly puniſhed thoſe who deſerved their protection. For,

2. Oppoſition to MESSIAH and his kingdom is no leſs *vain and ineffectual*, than unreaſonable and groundleſs. Nor is it vain only, but ruinous to thoſe who engage in it. What did the Jews build when they rejected the foundation-ſtone which God had laid in Zion? They acted, as they thought, with precaution and foreſight. They ſaid, *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the*

the Romans ſhall come and take away both our place and our nation *. Fooliſh politicians! Did they preſerve their city by crucifying the Son of God? The very evil they feared came upon them. Or rather, being abandoned of God to their own counſels, they brought it upon themſelves. In a few years the Romans, with whom they appeared ſo deſirous to keep upon good terms, deſtroyed their city with an unheard-of deſtruction, and exterminated them from the land. This was an emblem of the inevitable, total, irreparable ruin, which awaits all thoſe who perſiſt in rejecting the rule of MESSIAH. The nation, the individual, that will not ſerve him, muſt ſurely periſh.

Ah! If ſinners did but know what the bonds and cords are, which they are ſo determined to break; if they knew that his ſervice is perfect freedom; if they were aware what more dreadful bonds and chains they are rivetting upon themſelves, by refuſing his eaſy yoke, they would throw down their arms and ſubmit. They think, if they yield to the goſpel, they muſt bid adieu to pleaſure. But what will become of their pleaſure, when, the day of his forbearance being expired, he will ſpeak to them in his wrath, and fill them with hopeleſs horror and diſmay?

Bleſs the Lord, ye favoured few, whoſe eyes are opened, whoſe hearts are ſoftened, and who are become the willing people of this Saviour. Yet a little while, and he will appear again, and then you alſo ſhall appear with him in glory!

* John xi. 48.

SERMON XXXIV.

Oppoſition to Meſſiah in vain.

PSALM ii. 4.

He that ſitteth in the heavens ſhall laugh; the Lord ſhall have them in deriſion.

THE extent and efficacy of the depravity of mankind, cannot be fully eſtimated by the conduct of heathens deſtitute of divine revelation. We may ſay of the goſpel, in one ſenſe, what the Apoſtle ſays of the law, *It entered that ſin might abound**. It afforded occaſion for diſplaying the alienation of the heart of man from the bleſſed God in the ſtrongeſt light. The ſenſuality, oppreſſion, and idolatry which have prevailed in all ages, ſufficiently prove the wickedneſs of men to be very great. But the oppoſition which they who have rebelled againſt the government of their Creator, make to the propoſals of his grace, is a proof ſtill more ſtriking. If ſin has ſo hardened their hearts, and blinded their eyes, that of themſelves they neither can nor will implore his mercy; yet it might be thought that if the great God, whom they have ſo heinouſly offended, ſhould be pleaſed, of his own goodneſs, to make the *firſt overtures* of reconciliation, and to invite them to receive pardon, they would gladly attend to his gracious declaration; eſpecially when they are informed, that to preſerve them from periſhing, he gave up his only Son to ſufferings and death. But when they not only deſy his power but inſult his goodneſs; when they reject and blaſpheme

* Rom. v. 20.

blaſpheme the Saviour whom he commends to them; when they are but the more exaſperated by his tenders of mercy; when they ſcorn his meſſage, and perſecute his meſſengers by whom he intreats them to be reconciled; this mad and ungrateful carriage ſhews ſuch a rooted enmity againſt God in fallen men, as even the fallen angels are not capable of diſcovering. For MESSIAH *took not on him the nature of angels*, nor did he make propoſals of mercy to them. But he did take upon him our nature. He viſited us in perſon, for us he lived a ſufferer, and died that we might live. The prophets foreſaw and foretold the reception he would meet with, and their predictions were fulfilled. The Jews who profeſſed to expect him, and the heathens who had not heard of him, united their utmoſt efforts to withſtand and defeat the purpoſes of his unexampled love. What muſt the holy angels think of the baſeneſs, preſumption, and obſtinacy of ſuch creatures!

But rebellion againſt God is not only wickedneſs, but folly and infatuation in the extreme. *Who ever hardened himſelf againſt the Lord and proſpered* *? He whom they oppoſed, and againſt whom they thought they had prevailed when they ſaw him dead upon the croſs, ſoon reſumed his glory and his throne. The text therefore principally reſpects the oppoſition made to his goſpel and to his kingdom after his aſcenſion, which is ſtill carrying on, but which always was, and always will be in vain. The words I have read offer two points for the conſolation of thoſe who love him, and for the timely conſideration of thoſe who have hitherto diſregarded him.

I. *That he ſitteth in the heavens.*

II. The notice he taketh of his enemies. *He ſmiles at their rage*, and treats both their power and their policy with contempt.

* Job ix. 4.

I. He whom God has anointed, (therefore called MESSIAH), he againſt whom kings and rulers, nations and the people rage, *ſitteth in the heavens.* He has finiſhed his great work, and entered into his reſt; having by himſelf *purged our ſins*, he is immoveably ſeated on his throne, *at the right hand of the Majeſty on high* *. He is the Head, King, and Lord of principalities, dominions, and powers, poſſeſſed of all authority, unchangeably fixed over all, *God bleſſed for evermore* †. In this character he is the Repreſentative, High Prieſt, Advocate, and Shepherd of all who put their truſt in him. He is ever mindful of them. While he is preparing a place for them near himſelf, by the power of his Spirit he maintains an intercourſe with them, and manifeſts himſelf to them as he does not to the world. By his providence, which ruleth over all, he manages their concerns upon earth, ſupplies their wants, and gives them preſent and effectual help and ſupport in their time of trouble. To him their eyes and hearts are directed, *they look to him and are enlightened* ‡, ſtrengthened, and comforted. And under his protection they are ſafe. He having taken charge of them, and engaged to ſave them to the uttermoſt, *no weapon formed againſt them can proſper.* Now they may draw nigh to God with boldneſs, for they have One *who ever liveth to make interceſſion for them.* Now they may lay aſide all anxious uneaſy cares, for they have a mighty Friend who careth for them. Now they may ſay, each one for himſelf, *I will truſt and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my ſtrength, and my ſong, and my ſalvation* ‖. Whether you have indeed fled to him for refuge as the hope ſet before you, committed your ſoul to him, and accepted him in all his offices, as your Prophet, Prieſt, and King, is a point of experience; if you have, he knows it, for he enabled you to do it; and he will not diſappoint the hope

* Heb. i. 3. † Rom. ix. 5. ‡ Pſal. xxxiv. 5. ‖ Iſ. xii. 2.

hope and expectation which he himſelf has wrought in you. If you have, methinks *you* muſt know it likewiſe. Have you not done it more than once? Do you not daily repeat this ſurrender of yourſelf to him? It is certainly poſſible to aſſent to the truths of the goſpel, conſidered merely as doctrines or propoſitions, yea to plead and diſpute for them with much ſeeming earneſtneſs, and yet to be entirely a ſtranger to their power. But I truſt that they to whom I now ſpeak will underſtand me. Our Lord reminded Nathanael of what had paſſed under the fig-tree *, when he thought himſelf alone. Do not I remind you of ſeaſons, when no eye but the eye of Him who ſeeth in ſecret was upon you? Did not you then and there, once and again, accept him as your Saviour upon the warrant of his own word, devote yourſelf to his ſervice, reſign yourſelf to his diſpoſal, and entruſt yourſelf to his care? Then fear not. He that ſitteth in the heavens is on your ſide. If the premiſes be well grounded, the inference is ſure. And though many may riſe up againſt you, they ſhall not prevail; for he will *teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight*, will cover your *head in the day of battle*, and in the end *make you more than conqueror*. For the battle is not yours, but the Lord's. Your enemies are his, and his cauſe is yours. They who aſſociate againſt him ſhall be daſhed in pieces, as the billows break and die upon a rocky ſhore.

II. The feebleneſs and inſignificance of their rage againſt MESSIAH, is intimated by the manner in which he notices their proceedings. *He holds them in deriſion, he laughs them to ſcorn.* He has them perfectly under his controul, holds them in a chain when they think themſelves moſt at liberty, appoints the bounds beyond which they cannot paſs, and can in a moment check them, and make them feel his hook and bridle, when in the height of their career.

It

* John i. 48.

It is the Lord's pleaſure not only to favour and to ſupport his people, but to do it in ſuch a way that it may appear to be wholly his own work, and that the praiſe belongs to him alone. And therefore he permits their enemies for a ſeaſon to try if they can prevent his deſigns. For a ſeaſon, things take ſuch a courſe that their attempts ſeem to proſper; they threaten, they boaſt, and confidently expect to carry their point. But the conteſt always iſſues in their ſhame and confuſion. He not only diſconcerts their ſchemes, but makes them inſtrumental to the promoting of his own deſigns. Thus when he ſent Moſes to deliver Iſrael from Egypt, Pharaoh, inſtead of complying with his command, increaſed their burdens, added to the rigour of their bondage, and, though rebuked by a ſucceſſion of ſevere judgments, he hardened himſelf the more, and was determined to detain them if he could. But he could not detain them a day or an hour beyond the appointed time which God had long before made known to Abraham *. Then they were delivered, and Pharaoh and his hoſt overthrown in the Red Sea. Hereby the name of the God of Iſrael was more known, noticed, and magnified, than it would have been, if Pharaoh had diſmiſſed the people without reluctance or delay.

In like manner, when MESSIAH left the earth his followers were conſidered as ſheep without a ſhepherd. The world conſpired to ſuppreſs his cauſe, and to root out the remembrance of his people. But the methods they employed counteracted their own deſigns. They who were diſperſed by the perſecution that followed the death of Stephen, preached the word wherever they went, the goſpel ſpread from place to place, and the number of diſciples daily increaſed. So that the Jewiſh rulers ſoon found themſelves unequal to the taſk, and foreboded their own diſappointment, *doubting whereunto theſe things would grow* †. In ſome caſes the Lord ſignally interpoſed, and

* Exod. xii. 41, 42. † Acts v. 24.

and ſhewed how entirely the lives and the hearts of his adverſaries were in his hands. The haughty Herod was ſuddenly ſmitten by an inviſible hand, with a loathſome and mortal diſeaſe *. He fell, devoured by worms; but the ſucceſs of the goſpel, which he had preſumed to withſtand, greatly increaſed and ſpread. The furious zeal of Saul of Tarſus † againſt the truth, was ſilenced in a different manner. Jeſus, whom he ignorantly perſecuted, appeared to him in the way to Damaſcus, when he was *breathing out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples*, diſarmed his rage, made him a monument of his mercy, and an earneſt and ſucceſsful preacher of the faith he had laboured to deſtroy.

From the Jews, the buſineſs was transferred to the heathens, whoſe oppoſition was no leſs unavailing. Though they ſometimes affected to boaſt that they had ſuppreſſed the Chriſtian name, the goſpel was propagated in defiance of their attempts to prevent it. The worſt and the beſt of the Roman emperors were alike induſtrious, and alike unſucceſsful, in their endeavours to ſtifle the work of God. At length, in the reign of Conſtantine, the Chriſtian religion obtained the ſanction and protection of imperial authority.

But it ſoon appeared that the religion of the New Teſtament gained little advantage by this revolution. Though the worſhip of heathen idols gradually declined, and ſunk into diſrepute, the bulk of the people of all ranks were only changed in name. The world ſtill lay in wickedneſs ‡, and true Chriſtianity was ſtill expoſed to perſecution. When the name of *Chriſtian* ceaſed to be invidious and deſpicable, new names were ſoon invented to ſtigmatiſe the real ſervants of God; and eccleſiaſtical power gradually increaſed, till the myſtery of iniquity reigned for ages in the temple of God. The perſecutions of Popery equalled

* Acts xii. 23. † Acts ix. ‡ 1 John v. 19.

equalled and exceeded thoſe of Paganiſm. And they who aſpired to be Chriſtians indeed, were conſtrained, like the worthies of old, to *wander on mountains and in deſerts, to hide themſelves in dens and caves of the earth* *. Yet, under all diſadvantages, there was ſtill a remnant, according to the election of grace, who could not be compelled to wear the mark of the beaſt. And while perſecutors, who could only kill the body, ſeemed to weaken the church militant, they increaſed the number and the ſongs of the church triumphant.

To appearance the church of Chriſt was often brought low. It was very low at the time of the Reformation. But then it ſuddenly was revived, and broke forth like the ſun from behind a dark cloud; and the light of the goſpel was diffuſed far and wide, almoſt as at the beginning, in the apoſtles days. But Proteſtants were quickly actuated by the ſame ſpirit as their Popiſh and Pagan predeceſſors had been. The form of Chriſtianity was profeſſed and protected, and the power of it denied and oppoſed. And to this day it remains a truth verified by experience, *that all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, muſt*, in one way or other, *ſuffer perſecution* †.

Of late years the ſanguinary ſpirit which, under pretence of doing God ſervice, deſtroyed his people by fire and tortures, is much ſubſided. We live in a time when great pretences are made to candour and moderation. We have reaſon to be thankful for our religious liberty, to the good providence of God. But, ſo far as men are concerned, we are not indebted for it, to a juſt ſenſe and acknowledgment of the right of private judgment, but to the prevalence of ſceptical indifference and infidelity. The religion of the goſpel was, perhaps, never more deſpiſed and hated than at preſent. We ſeem to be returning apace

* Heb. xi. 38. † 2 Tim. iii. 12.

apace to the ſtate of the primitive ages, when there were but two ſorts of perſons, Chriſtians and infidels. But notwithſtanding all the arts and aſſaults of men, whether open enemies or pretended friends, the Bible is ſtill extant, the goſpel is ſtill preached, yea, is ſtill ſpreading. The Lord has always had a people, tho' they have been often hidden from the general notice and obſervation of men. *He that ſitteth in the heavens* laughs his oppoſers to ſcorn, and maintains his own cauſe in defiance of them all.

Surely if this work was not of God, the united efforts of kings, councils, popes, philoſophers, the great, the wiſe, the decent, and the profligate, muſt have overthrown it long ago. If a miracle be demanded in proof of Chriſtianity, behold one! Though the world has been raging and plotting againſt it, from its firſt appearance; though it has been fiercely aſſaulted by thoſe without, and ſhamefully betrayed by many within, it ſtill ſubſiſts, it ſtill flouriſhes. And ſubſiſt it ſhall, for it is maintained by him, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can controul or change them as he pleaſes. He can, and he will, ſupport and ſtrengthen his people under all their ſufferings. He can diſappoint his adverſaries by unexpected events, divide them among themſelves, and ſo manage them by his providence, as to make them protect and promote the very cauſe which they hate. And whenever he pleaſes he can, as it were, from the ſtones *, raiſe up inſtruments to carry on his work, and to ſhew forth his praiſe. Therefore,

1. Let not his people tremble for the ark. Our eyes indeed ſhould affect our hearts. It becomes us to be jealous for the Lord of hoſts, to be concerned for the contempt and diſhonour that is caſt upon his government and grace, to be grieved for the abounding abominations of the day, and to pity and pray for obſtinate

* Matt. iii. 9.

obſtinate ſinners who know not what they do. But we need not fear the failure of his promiſe. His truth and honour are engaged for the ſucceſs of his goſpel, and they muſt ſtand or fall together. It is a cauſe dearer to him than it can be to us. The manifeſtation of his glory in the ſalvation of ſinners, by the doctrine of the croſs, is the one great concern, for which the ſucceſſion of day and night, and of the ſeaſons of the year, is continued, and the viſible frame of nature is preſerved. *He will work, and none ſhall let it. The kingdoms of the earth ſhall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Chriſt. The fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in, and the diſperſed of Iſrael ſhall return to the Lord their God, and be ſaved.* Theſe great events, to thoſe who judge by an eye of ſenſe, and according to the preſent ſtate of things, may appear improbable or impoſſible. But the Lord of hoſts hath purpoſed, and who ſhall diſannul it? *His hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back* *?

2. Think it neither ſtrange nor hard, if any of you are called to ſuffer for the ſake of the truth. Think it not *ſtrange;* for thus it has been from the beginning. Think it not *hard;* for our ſufferings are ſmall, if compared with the lot of many who have lived before us. We are not called to reſiſt unto blood. Many prophets and righteous men have deſired to ſee ſuch days of liberty as we are favoured with, but have not ſeen them.

3. Conſider ſeriouſly, *Who is on the Lord's ſide?* His is the ſtrongeſt ſide, and muſt prevail. If you have yielded yourſelves to him, and taken upon you his yoke, your beſt intereſts are ſafe, your final happineſs is ſecured. Nothing can ſeparate you from his love. You ſhall be kept by his power through faith, *and no weapon formed againſt you ſhall proſper.* But if you are againſt him, tremble, for the day of his

* Iſ. xiv. 27.

his wrath will come, it will *burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, ſhall be as ſtubble, and the day that cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and ſhall leave them neither root nor branch* [a]. Turn therefore in time from your evil ways, ſubmit yourſelves unto him, and implore his mercy while he waiteth to be gracious, *that iniquity may not be your ruin.*

[a] Mal. iv. 1.

SER-

SERMON XXXV.

Oppoſition to Meſſiah ruinous.

PSALM ii. 9.

Thou ſhalt break them with a rod of iron, thou ſhalt dash them in pieces like a potter's veſſel.

THERE is a ſpecies of the ſublime in writing, which ſeems peculiar to the Scripture, and of which, properly, no ſubjects but thoſe of divine revelation are capable. With us things inconſiderable in themſelves are elevated by ſplendid images, which give them an apparent importance beyond what they can juſtly claim. Thus the poet, when deſcribing a battle among bees, by a judicious ſelection of epithets and figures, excites in the minds of his readers the idea of two mighty armies contending for empire. But the works and ways of God are too great in themſelves to admit of any heightening repreſentation. *We* conceive more forcibly of ſmall things by illuſtrations borrowed from thoſe which are greater; but the Scripture frequently illuſtrates great things, by contraſting them with thoſe which in our eſtimation are trivial and feeble. One inſtance, out of many which might be mentioned, is that truly ſublime paſſage of the prophet, *And all the host of heaven ſhall be diſſolved, and the heavens ſhall be rolled together as a ſcroll; and all their hoſt ſhall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree* *. The Apoſtle, when favoured with a heavenly viſion, introduces the ſame thought, almoſt in the ſame words, *And the ſtars of heaven fell unto the earth*,

* Iſ. xxxiv. 4.

earth, even as a fig-tree caſteth her untimely figs, when ſhe is ſhaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together *. Such forms of expreſſion are becoming the Majeſty of the great God, before whom the difference between the great and the ſmall in our judgment is annihilated. In his view, the earth, with all its inhabitants, are but as a drop which falls unnoticed from the bucket, or as the duſt which cleaves to the balance †, without affecting its equilibrium. At the ſame time, the ſimplicity of theſe illuſtrations, ſo well ſuited to confound the pride of the wiſe, is ſtriking and obvious to the loweſt capacities. If Homer or Virgil had been to deſcribe the exertion and effect of the power of God, in ſubduing and puniſhing his enemies, they would probably have laboured for a ſimile ſufficiently grand. But I much queſtion if they would have thought of the image in my text, though none can be more expreſſive of utter irreparable ruin, or of the eaſe with which it is accompliſhed. *He ſhall daſh them in pieces like a potter's veſſel* ‡.

The ſeries of the paſſages we have lately conſidered is very regular and beautiful. MESSIAH *aſcended on high, and received gifts for men.* The firſt and immediate conſequence of his exaltation in our nature, *is the publication of the goſpel.* Then follows the happy and beneficial influence of the goſpel on thoſe who thankfully receive it. *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach theſe glad tidings!* The next paſſage ſecures and deſcribes its extenſive progreſs.—*The ſound went forth into all the earth.* The oppoſition awakened by it is then deſcribed, Firſt, as *unreaſonable, Why do the Heathen rage?* Secondly, *as ineffectual, the Lord laughs at his oppoſers;* he ſits upon his immoveable throne, and derides their attempts. Thirdly, the final iſſue of their mad reſiſtance, *their confuſion and ruin,* is the ſubject of the verſe I have read, which prepares for the cloſe of the ſecond part of

* Rev. vi. 13, 14. † Iſ. xl. 15. ‡ Pſ. ii. 9.

of the Oratorio. His enemies ſhall periſh, his kingdom ſhall be eſtabliſhed and conſummated. And then all holy intelligent beings ſhall join in a ſong of triumph, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*

The two expreſſions, of breaking with a rod of iron, and daſhing in pieces, ſuggeſt nearly the ſame idea: But as elſewhere he is ſaid to *rule* his enemies *with a rod of iron* *, I ſhall avail myſelf of this variation, in order to give you a more complete view of the dreadful ſtate of thoſe who oppoſe MESSIAH and his kingdom. He rules them at preſent with a rod of iron, and hereafter he will *daſh them in pieces like a potter's veſſel.* Let us, therefore, conſider,

I. How the Lord MESSIAH rules over impenitent and obſtinate ſinners in the preſent life. They attempt (in vain) to withdraw from his ſubjection they oppoſe his holy will; they refuſe to ſubmit to his golden ſceptre: He will, therefore, *rule them with a rod of iron.* For though they boaſt of their liberty, and preſume to ſay *Who is Lord over us* †? yet in the thing wherein they ſpeak proudly, *he is above them* ‡: They cannot hide themſelves from his notice, nor avoid the intimations of his diſpleaſure.

1. One branch of his iron rule over them, conſiſts in that certain and inſeparable connection which he has eſtabliſhed between ſin and miſery. *The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace* ||. They who live in the fear of the Lord, and yield a willing obedience to his word, not only poſſeſs peace of conſcience, and a hope which can look with comfort beyond the grave; but are thereby preſerved from innumerable evils, into which they who attempt to caſt off his yoke unavoidably plunge themſelves On the contrary, *the way of tranſgreſſors is hard* §. It is hard in itſelf, if we ſet aſide, for a moment, the conſideration of the dreadful end to which it leads. Could you ſee what paſſes

* Rev. xix. 15. † Pſ. xii. 4. ‡ Exod. xviii. 11.
|| James iii. 18. § Prov. xiii. 15.

paſſes within the breaſt of a man who diſdains to be governed by the rule of God's word, you would ſee his heart torn to pieces by the clamorous, inſatiable demands of the various, violent, inconſiſtent appetites and paſſions, which, like ſo many wild beaſts, are continually preying upon him. Not one of them can be fully gratified, much leſs all, for many of them are diametrically oppoſite to each other. The boilings of anger, the gnawings of envy, the thirſt of covetouſneſs, the anxieties attendant on pride and ambition, muſt make the mind that is ſubject to them miſerable. *There is no peace to the wicked;* there can be none. Farther, their evil tempers and irregular deſires produce outward and viſible effects, which publicly and manifeſtly prove, that the ſervice of ſin is a hard drudgery, and that whatever pleaſure it may ſeem to promiſe, its pay is miſery and pain. *Who hath woe, contentions, and wounds, without cauſe* *? The drunkard. Lewdneſs and drunkenneſs are high roads, if I may ſo ſpeak, leading to infamy, diſeaſe, penury, and death. Such perſons do not live out half the days which their conſtitutions might have afforded, if they had not ſold themſelves to do wickedly. Again, look into their houſes. Where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. How frequently may we obſerve, in their family-connections, diſcord and enmity between man and wife, unkind parents, diſobedient children, tyrannical maſters, and treacherous ſervants? Thus they live, *hateful in themſelves, and hating one another* †. If they have what the world accounts proſperity, their hard maſter, Satan, ſo works upon their evil diſpoſitions, that they can derive no real comfort from it. Every day, almoſt every hour, puts ſome new bitterneſs into their cup. And in trouble they have no reſource: having no acceſs to God, no promiſe to ſupport them, no relief from him

* Prov. xxiii. 29. † Tit. iii. 3.

him againſt their anxieties and fears; they either ſink down in ſullen comfortleſs deſpondency, or in a ſpirit of wild rebellion, *blaſpheme him becauſe of their plagues* *. In ſociety they are dreaded and avoided by the ſober and ſerious, and can only aſſociate with ſuch as themſelves. There, indeed, they will pretend to be happy; they carouſe, and make a noiſe, and aſſiſt each other to baniſh reflection; yet frequently the drink, or the devil, break their intimacies, and ſtir them up to quarrels, broils, and miſchief. Such is a life of ſin. *The Lord rules them with a rod of iron.* They renounce his fear, and he refuſes them his bleſſing. Nothing more is neceſſary to render them miſerable, than to leave them to themſelves.

2. *He rules them with a rod of iron,* by his power over conſcience. They may boaſt and laugh, but we know the gall and bitterneſs of their ſtate; for we, likewiſe, were in it, until the Lord delivered us. Let them ſay what they will, we are ſure that there are ſeaſons, when, like him whom they ſerve, *they believe and tremble* †. They cannot always be in company, they cannot always be intoxicated; though this is the very reaſon why many intoxicate themſelves ſo often, becauſe they cannot bear their own thoughts when ſober. They are then a burden and a terror to themſelves. They feel the iron rod. How awful are the thoughts which ſometimes awaken them, or keep them awake, in the ſilent hours of the night! What terrors ſeize them in ſickneſs, or when they are compelled to think of death! What a death-warrant do they often receive in their ſouls, under the preaching of that word of God, which fills his people with joy and peace! Many will not hear it. But why not? They will not, becauſe they dare not. I am perſuaded there are more than a few of the brave ſpirits of the preſent day, who would

* Rev. xvi. 21. † James ii. 19.

would willingly change conditions with a dog; and be glad to part with their reaſon, if they could at the ſame time get rid of the horrors which haunt their conſciences. Is there one ſuch perſon here? Let me entreat you to ſtop and conſider, before it be too late. There is yet forgiveneſs with God. Your caſe, though dangerous, is not deſperate, if you do not make it ſo yourſelf I ould direct your thoughts to Jeſus. Look to him, and implore his mercy His blood can cleanſe from all ſin. He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt

It is poſſible ſome may affect to contradict the repreſentation I have made, and be ready to ſay, "I "find nothing of all this. I take a pleaſure in my "way. I have a healthy body, money at my com-"mand, and I can ſleep ſoundly. I feel none "of the qualms of conſcience you ſpeak of; and "though the ſaints and good folks care as little for "me as I do for them, yet I am very well and hap-"py with ſuch acquaintance as I like beſt. As to "an hereafter, I do not think of it; but I am de-"termined to live now" In anſwer to ſentiments of this kind, which I am afraid are too common, I obſerve,

3. That the amazing hardneſs and blindneſs of heart to which ſome ſinners are given up, is another, and the moſt terrible effect *of that iron rod* with which the Lord *rules his enemies*. Pharaoh could ſay as poſitively as you, *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey him* *? But becauſe, being often rebuked, he perſiſted in his obſtinacy, the conteſt terminated in his deſtruction. If you are obſtinate like him now, I believe you were not always ſo. You muſt have laboured hard, you muſt have reſiſted the light of truth, and have ſtifled many a conviction, before you could arrive to this pitch of obduracy You have fought againſt the Holy Spirit: and woe unto you,

* Exod v. 2.

you, if he be gone, gone for ever, and will ſtrive with you no more. To be thus given up of God to a reprobate mind, is the heavieſt judgment that a ſinner can be viſited with on this ſide hell. I am at a loſs what to ſay to a perſon thus diſpoſed, and I hope there are none ſuch preſent. But I would warn thoſe, who, though they have ſinned with a high hand, are not yet altogether paſt feeling, leſt you fall into ſuch a ſtate of confirmed diſobedience and unbelief. *Take heed leſt you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin* *. If under the light of the goſpel you can go on in a courſe of wilful, wanton, deliberate wickedneſs, you are upon the very edge of the unpardonable ſin, of that ſtate from which it is impoſſible to renew you to repentance. If the Bible be, as you vainly wiſh it may prove, *a cunningly devijed fable*, you may trample upon it with impunity, and laugh on ſecurely to the end of life. But if it be true, remember you have been this day warned of the conſequences of deſpiſing it. If you will periſh, I am clear of your blood.

II. I proceed to conſider the final iſſue of this unequal conteſt between the worms of the earth and their Maker. *He will daſh them in pieces like a potter's veſſel.* Such a veſſel may be curiouſly wrought, and appear beautiful to the eye; but it is frail, eaſily broken, and, when once broken to pieces, it is irreparable. It is therefore a fit emblem of mortal man in his beſt eſtate. *We are fearfully and wonderfully made* †. The texture of the human frame is admirable. The natural capacities of the mind of man, the powers of his underſtanding, will, and affections, the rapidity of imagination, the comprehenſion of memory, eſpecially in ſome inſtances, are ſo many proofs, that, conſidered as a creature of God, he is a noble creature; and though he is debaſed and degraded by ſin, there are traces of his original excellence

* Heb. iii. 13. † Pſ. cxxxix. 14.

lence remaining, ſufficient to denominate him, in the words of the poet, *majeſtic though in ruins.* But if you ſuppoſe him rich, powerful, wiſe, in the common ſenſe of the words, he is brittle as a potter's veſſel, and while poſſeſſed of every poſſible advantage, he is but like the graſs or the flower of the field, which, in its moſt flouriſhing ſtate, falls in a moment at the ſtroke of the ſcythe, and withers and dies. A fever, a fall, a tile, a grain of ſand, or the air that finds its way through a crevice, may be an overmatch for the ſtrongeſt man, and bring him down haſtily to the grave. By a ſmall change in the brain, or ſome part of the nervous ſyſtem, he who now prides himſelf in his intellectual abilities, may ſoon become a lunatic or an idiot. Diſeaſe may quickly render the beauty loathſome, and the robuſt weak as infancy. There are earthen or china veſſels, which might poſſibly endure for many ages, if carefully preſerved from violence. But the ſeeds of decay and death are ſown in our very frame. We are cruſhed before the moth, and moulder away untouched, under the weight of time. How ſurely and inevitably then muſt they whom the Lord ſtrikes with his iron rod, be ſhattered with the blow!

Communities and collective bodies of men are, in his hand, no leſs frail than individuals. The firſt-born throughout Egypt, and the vaſt army of Sennacherib, periſhed in a night. The Romans were the iron rod in his hand, wherewith he daſhed the Jewiſh nation to pieces. Their fragments are ſcattered far and wide to this day, and who can gather them up? The Roman empire was likewiſe daſhed to pieces in its turn; and ſuch has been the end ſucceſſively of many powers, and of many perſons who have preſumed to oppoſe his deſigns. For a while they were permitted to rage, and plot, and ſtrive; but at length they ſtumbled and fell, and their memory is periſhed.

But it is proper to bring the conſideration nearer home. I have been informed, that the muſic to which this paſſage is ſet, is ſo well adapted to the idea it expreſſes, as in a manner to ſtartle thoſe who hear it. They who live in ſinful habits, regardleſs of the goſpel, would be ſtartled, indeed, if they were duly ſenſible how directly the words apply to their own ſituation, and that the Pſalmiſt deſcribes the manner in which God will treat them, if they continue impenitent. If we could ſee all that paſſes upon dying beds, we ſhould often ſee the falſe peace and vain hopes of ſinners daſhed to pieces when eternity is opening upon their view. We ſhall certainly ſee the ſolemnity of the great day: *For we muſt all appear*, not only as ſpectators, but as parties nearly intereſted in the proceedings, *before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo who pierced him!* He will *deſcend with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*, and before him ſhall be gathered all nations. Where then ſhall the ſinner and the ungodly appear? What will then become of thoſe who deſpiſe, and thoſe who abuſe the goſpel of the grace of God? The libertine, the infidel, the apoſtate, the hypocrite, the profane ſcoffer, and the falſe profeſſor, how will they ſtand, or whither will they flee, when the great Judge ſhall ſit upon his awful throne, and the books ſhall be opened, and every ſecret thing ſhall be diſcloſed! Alas for them that *are full*, and *that laugh now, for then they ſhall pine and mourn* *. Then their cavils will be ſilenced, their guilt, with all its aggravations, be charged home upon them, and no plea, no advocate be found. Can their hearts endure, or their hands be ſtrong, when he ſhall ſpeak to them in his wrath, and ſay, *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?*

But

* Luke vi. 25.

But let them who love his name rejoice. You have fled for refuge to the hope ſet before you. To you his appearance will be delightful, and his voice welcome. You ſhall not be aſhamed. This awful God is yours. He will then own and accept you before aſſembled worlds, and will ſay, *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* Then *the days of your mourning ſhall be ended, and your ſun ſhall go down no more* *.

* Matt. xxv. 34. Iſ. lx. 20.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Lord reigneth.

REV. xix 6.

Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

THE book of the Revelation, being chiefly prophetical, will not perhaps be fully underſtood, till the final accompliſhment of the events ſhall draw near, and throw a ſtronger light upon the whole ſeries. But while the learned commentators have been hitherto divided and perplexed in their attempts to illuſtrate many parts of it, there are other parts well adapted for the inſtruction and refreſhment of plain Chriſtians; particularly thoſe paſſages in which the ſcenery and images ſeem deſigned to give us ſome repreſentation of the happineſs and worſhip of the heavenly ſtate. Thus a plain unlettered believer, when reading with attention the fourth and fifth chapters, though he cannot give a reaſon why the elders are four and twenty, the living creatures four, and the number of their wings neither more nor leſs than ſix; yet, from the whole deſcription of the Lamb upon the throne, the ſongs of the redeemed, and the chorus of the angels, he receives ſuch an impreſſion of glory, as awakens his gratitude, deſire, and joy, and excites *him* likewiſe to take up the ſame ſong of praiſe, *to him who has loved him, and waſhed him from his ſins in his own blood.* He is content to leave the diſcuſſion of hard queſtions to learned men, while he feeds by faith upon thoſe ſimple truths which can only be reliſhed by a ſpiritual taſte;

and

and which, where there is ſuch a taſte, make their way to the heart, without the aſſiſtance of critical diſquiſition.

The ſubject of the preceding chapter, is the deſtruction of myſtical Babylon, the head of the oppoſition againſt the kingdom of the Lord Chriſt. But Babylon ſinks like a mill-ſtone in the mighty ocean, and is no more found. So muſt all his enemies periſh. The cataſtrophe of Babylon, like that of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, is beheld by the ſaints and ſervants of the Lord with admiration, and furniſhes them with a theme for a ſong of triumph to his praiſe. This may be properly ſtyled *ſacred muſic* indeed. It is commanded, inſpired, and regulated, by the Lord himſelf. The performers are all intereſted in the ſubject, *they who fear God*, and are devoted to his ſervice and glory. And though perſons of this character are comparatively few upon earth, hidden, and in a manner loſt, among the crowd of mankind, they will be, when brought together at laſt, a very large company. Their united voices are here compared to the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunders, and this is the ſolemn cloſe, the chorus of their ſong, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

The impreſſion which the performance of this paſſage in the Oratorio uſually makes upon the audience, is well known. But however great the power of muſic may be, ſhould we even allow the flights of poetry to be truth, *that it can ſoften rocks, and bend the knotty oak*, one thing we are ſure it cannot do; it cannot ſoften and change the hard heart, it cannot bend the obdurate will of man. If all the people who ſucceſſively hear *the Meſſiah*, who are ſtruck and aſtoniſhed, for the moment, by this chorus in particular, were to bring away with them an abiding ſenſe of the importance of the ſentiment it contains, the nation would ſoon wear a new face.

But do the profeſſed lovers of ſacred muſic, in this enlightened age, generally live, as if they really believed that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?* Rather, do not the greater part of them live, as they might do if they were ſure of the contrary? as if they were ſatisfied to a demonſtration, that either there is no God, or that his providence is not concerned in human affairs? I appeal to conſcience; I appeal to fact.

I apprehend that this paſſage, taken in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, refers to a period not yet arrived. Babylon is not yet fallen. The ſervants of God in the preſent day, will moſt probably fulfil their appointed time upon earth, like thoſe who have lived before them, in a ſtate of conflict. They muſt endure the croſs, and ſuſtain oppoſition for his ſake. The people who ſhall live when *the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Chriſt*, when the *nations ſhall learn war no more*, are yet unborn. But even now we may rejoice *that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, and that *Jeſus is King of kings, and Lord of lords.* I muſt conſider my text as referring to him. Many of the heathens believed that God reigned. The Chriſtian doctrine is, that the Lord God omnipotent exerciſeth his dominion and government in the perſon of Chriſt. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hands* *. And thus our Lord, after his reſurrection, aſſured his diſciples, *All power is committed unto me in heaven and in earth* †. He has already *taken to himſelf his great power, and reigneth.* His right of reigning over all is eſſential to his divine nature; but the adminiſtration of government in the nature of man, is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death. But in the union of both natures, he is one perſon, Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. All the riches and fulneſs of the Godhead, all the peculiar honours of the Mediator,

* John iii. 35. † Matt. xxviii. 18.

ator, centre in him. They may be diſtinguiſhed, but they are inſeparable.

Happy are they who can, upon ſolid and ſcriptural grounds, exult in the thought that the Lord reigneth, and can make his government the ſubject of their hallelujahs and praiſes! Happy they, who ſee, acknowledge, and admire, his management in the kingdom of providence, and are the willing ſubjects of his kingdom of grace. Let us take a brief ſurvey of his reigning glory in theſe kingdoms.

I. Great and marvellous is this Lord God omnipotent in his kingdom of *Univerſal Providence!* His mighty arm ſuſtains the vaſt fabric of the univerſe. He upholds the ſtars in their courſes. If we attentively conſider their multitude, their magnitudes, their diſtances from us and from each other, and the amazing ſwiftneſs, variety, and regularity of their motions, our minds are overwhelmed, our thoughts confounded, by the vaſtneſs and the wonders of the ſcene. But *He* ſpoke them into being, and they are preſerved in their ſtations and revolutions by his power and agency. If we fix our thoughts upon the earth, though in compariſon of the immenſity of his creation it is but as a point or a grain of ſand, it is the object of his inceſſant care. All its various inhabitants derive their exiſtence and their ſupport from him. He provides for the young ravens when unable to fly, and for the young lions that traverſe the woods. The inſtinct of animals, whereby they are unerringly inſtructed in whatever concerns the welfare and preſervation of their ſpecies, ſo vaſtly exceeding the boaſted wiſdom of man, that he can neither imitate nor comprehend it, is communicated by him. He teaches the birds to build their neſts, the ſpider to weave his web, and inſtructs the communities of bees, and inſignificant emmets, to form their admirable policies and government among themſelves. If we ſpeak of intel-

ligent beings, *He does what he pleaſes in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.* He directs and over-rules the counſels and purpoſes of men, ſo that though they act freely, the event of all their different interfering ſchemes, is only the accompliſhment of his purpoſes. When they are employed as his inſtruments, from ſmall beginnings, and in defiance of difficulties apparently inſuperable, they ſucceed beyond their own expectations. When unhappily engaged againſt his deſigns, in vain they rage and plot. He takes the wiſe in their own craftineſs, pours contempt upon their power and policy, and all their great preparations melt like a miſt, or like ſnow before the ſun, and leave no trace behind. Still more wonderful, to the eye of faith, is his controul over Satan and the powers of darkneſs. Whatever, for wiſe reaſons, though unknown to us, he may permit them to do, they cannot, with all their ſubtlety or ſtrength, detain one ſoul in their bondage longer than till his appointed time of releaſe; nor recover one ſoul back to their dominion, of which he is pleaſed to undertake the care. On the contrary, he breaks the heads of theſe Leviathans in pieces, turns their counſels againſt themſelves, and makes them inſtrumental in purifying his people, and extending his church, by the means they employ for the deſtruction of both. Thus they who dwell under his ſhadow are ſafe; for all things are in his power, and he always careth for them, and keepeth them, as the pupil of his eye; and therefore, though they are exerciſed with trials, and ſuffer many things for their good, his eye being always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer, they are ſupported, ſupplied, relieved, delivered, and at laſt made more than conquerors.

II. He has a peculiar kingdom, which he has eſtabliſhed diſtinct from the kingdoms of this world, though diffuſed and extended among them, and

which,

which, in due time, like leaven, will pervade and assimilate them all to himself. This is the kingdom of the gospel, his church. It is founded upon a rock, and though the gates of hell continually war against it, they cannot prevail. For he is *a wall of fire round about it, and a glory in the midst of it* *.

Here he reigns upon *a throne of grace*. He possesses and exercises unlimited authority as a sovereign, to save whom he pleases, to pardon all manner of sins and offences, and to admit rebels and enemies, when they submit themselves and bow to his golden sceptre, into the number of his children and his friends. Seldom do the kings of the earth publish an act of grace in favour of those who have been guilty of rebellion, without clogging it with exceptions. Either they feel a resentment against some of the delinquents, which they have not magnanimity sufficient to conquer, or they dare not trust them. But his mercy is infinite; and he knows how to change their hearts when he pardons their sins.

Perhaps it may not be a digression wholly unuseful and impertinent, if I take this occasion to point out the several senses in which the word *Church* may be understood, agreeable to the scripture.

1. It denotes in the aggregate, the *mystical church*, the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head †. A succession of these has appeared upon earth in every age, from the days of righteous Abel whom Cain slew; and we have reason to believe, that the far greater part of them are yet unborn. They will all be assembled together before the throne, in the great day of his final appearance, and inherit the kingdom of glory prepared for them. This is the *church which God hath bought with his own blood* ‡. Happy are they who belong to this society of the redeemed, *whose names are written in heaven.*

* Zech. ii. 5. † Col. i. 18. ‡ Acts xx. 28.

2. *The visible church* contains all those who bear and acknowledge the name of Christians, and who admit and enjoy the gospel-revelation. The church, in this sense, includes many nations. But it is a small thing to belong only to the visible church, for it is compared to a corn-floor *, on which chaff is mingled with the wheat; to a field in which tares grow promiscuously with the good seed; to a fisher's net inclosing a great multitude of fishes both good and bad †. But a time of discrimination will come. The chaff and the tares, and whatever is evil, will be consumed. Alas! what will it avail at last to say, *Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence*, at thy table with thy true disciples, *and thou hast taught in our streets* ‡, and we have heard in our own language of thy wonderful works, if you can say no more? My heart is pained with the apprehension, lest some of you who have joined in the same public worship with true believers, have sat in the same seat, and lived in the same families, should at last see them, with whom you have been very nearly connected in this world, received into the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves be shut out.

3. The *catholic church*, in any one period, is that part of the visible church which is united to the Lord by living faith. It comprizes all who agree in the profession of the fundamental truths of the gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts, or in the Apostle's words, *All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* ||. This catholic church, through the policy of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart, is too much divided against itself. Prejudice, bigotry, and remaining ignorance, greatly prevent that desirable union amongst true Christians, which would promote their peace, comfort,

* Matt. iii. 12.
† Matt xiii. 24, 47.
‡ Luke xiii. 26, 27.
|| Eph. vi. 24.

fort, and increaſe, and would contribute more than a thouſand arguments to put their adverſaries to ſhame and to ſilence. That ſhameful contention for denominations, parties, and favourite preachers, for which the Apoſtle reproved the Corinthians *, is ſtill greatly to be lamented. But though they are too backward in acknowledging and aſſiſting each other, the Lord is merciful to their weakneſs, and bears with them all. And as they grow in grace, and drink more into his Spirit, their hearts are enlarged, and they approach nearer to his pattern of long-ſuffering, patience, and tenderneſs.

4. The word *church* is applied to particular ſocieties of Chriſtians, who are connected by a participation in the ſame ordinances of the goſpel, and who maintain a ſcriptural ſeparation from the ſinful ſpirit and cuſtoms of the world. And though there may be pretenders among them, as there were among the apoſtolic churches, they are denominated by the better part. They belong to the catholic church by their profeſſion of the truth, of courſe they are a part of the viſible church; and thoſe of them who are in deed and in truth what they profeſs to be, are living members of the myſtical church, to which all the promiſes are made. By whatever name they are known or diſtinguiſhed among men, they are *branches of the true vine, they have their fruits unto holineſs, and their end, everlaſting life.* But to return,

In this his church, or ſpiritual kingdom, he rules by wiſe and gracious laws and ordinances. He releaſes his ſubjects from all authority, in point of conſcience, but his own, and enjoins them to *call no one maſter but himſelf* †. If they *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith he has made them free* ‡, they will not give themſelves up implicitly to the dictates of any man, nor follow him farther than he follows their Lord. And conſequently, if they are influenced

* 1 Cor. iii. 4. † Matt. xxiii. 8,—10. ‡ Gal. v. 1.

ced by his royal law of doing to others as they would that others ſhould do unto them, they will not attempt to exert an undue authority, or wiſh to be called *maſters* themſelves, ſo as to aſſume a dogmatical carriage, or to expect a univerſal and abſolute ſubmiſſion. But it muſt be owned, that in our preſent ſtate of infirmity, this privilege is not ſufficiently prized, nor this command duly complied with, there being ſcarcely a man who does not either arrogate too much to himſelf, or allow too much to others. A fault in the one or the other of theſe reſpects, may be aſſigned as a principal cauſe of moſt of the evils which deform the appearance, or injure the peace of the church. But the deſign of his goſpel is to ſet his people at liberty from the yoke of men, from the fetters of cuſtom and tradition, of ſuperſtition and will-worſhip; that they may enjoy, in his ſervice, a ſtate of perfect freedom.

For it is the principal glory of his kingdom, that he reigns in the hearts of his people. There he writes his precepts, impreſſes his image, and erects his throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward ſecret influence, breathing his own life and ſpirit into them, ſo that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleaſurable, and its own reward. By the diſcoveries he affords them of his love, he wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their underſtandings. They derive from him the *ſpirit of power, of love, and of a ſound mind* *, and run with alacrity in the way of his commandments.

It is impoſſible therefore to make this ſong our own, and cordially to rejoice that *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, unleſs we are the willing ſubjects of his government; unleſs we are really pleaſed with his appointed way of ſalvation, approve of his precepts, and, from a view of his wiſdom and goodneſs,

* 2 Tim. i. 7.

neſs, can chearfully ſubmit and reſign ourſelves to the diſpoſal of his providence. In all theſe reſpects we are by nature at variance with him. We are too proud to be indebted to his grace, too wiſe in our own conceits to deſire his inſtruction, too obſtinately attached to the love and practice of ſin, to be capable of reliſhing the beauty and ſpirituality of his commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too ſtrong and graſping, to permit us to be ſatisfied with the lot, and with the diſpenſations he appoints for us. We wiſh, if poſſible, and as far as poſſible we attempt, to be our own carvers. We are unthankful when he beſtows, impatient if he with-holds, and if he ſees fit to reſume the gifts of which we are unworthy, we repine and rebel againſt his will. This enmity muſt be ſubdued, before we can be pleaſed with his government. In other words, we muſt be changed, we muſt be made new creatures. To produce this change, this new creation, the goſpel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought. The ſinner who is firſt convinced of his guilt and miſery, and then reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to his adminiſtration. He owns and feels the propriety of his proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in his ſharpeſt afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the deſert of his iniquities. He conſiders himſelf as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the ſtrongeſt obligations, *to live no longer to himſelf, but to him who loved him, and gave himſelf for him.* And what was before his dread and diſlike, becomes now the joy of his heart, the thought, that the Lord reigneth, and that all his concerns are in the hands of him who doeth all things well.

Are there any among us, who ſay in their hearts, *We will not have this* Saviour *to rule over us?* The thought is no leſs vain than wicked. He muſt, he will *reign, till he has ſubdued all enemies under his feet.* You muſt either bend or break before him.

SER-

SERMON XXXVII.

The Extent of Meſſiah's Spiritual Kingdom.

REV. xi. 15.

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt; and he ſhall reign for ever and ever.

THE kingdom of our Lord in the heart, and in the world, is frequently compared to a building or houſe, of which he himſelf is both the foundation and the architect *. A building advances by degrees †, and while it is in an unfiniſhed ſtate, a ſtranger cannot, by viewing its preſent appearance, form an accurate judgment of the deſign, and what the whole will be when completed. For a time, the walls are of unequal height, it is disfigured by rubbiſh, which at the proper ſeaſon will be taken away; and by ſcaffolding, which, though uſeful for carrying on the building, does not properly belong to it, but will likewiſe be removed when the preſent temporary ſervice is anſwered. But the architect himſelf proceeds according to a determinate plan, and his idea of the whole work is perfect from the beginning. It is thus the Lord views his people in the preſent life. He has begun a good work in them, but as yet every part of it is imperfect and unfiniſhed; and there are not only defects to be ſupplied, but deformities and incumbrances that muſt be removed. Many of the diſpenſations and exerciſes which contribute to form their religious character, do not properly belong to that work which is to abide, though they have a ſubſerviency to promote it. When that

* Iſa. xxviii. 16. liv. 11, 12. † 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 20,—22.

that which is perfect is come, the reſt ſhall be done away.

And thus, although the growth and extent of his kingdom is the great ſcope and object of his providence, to which all the revolutions that take place in the kingdoms of this world ſhall be finally ſubſervient; yet the ſteps by which he is carrying forward his deſign, are, for the moſt part, remote from the common apprehenſions of mankind, and therefore ſeldom engage their attention. His kingdom, founded upon the rock of ages, is building, advancing, and the gates of hell ſhall not be able to withſtand its progreſs. Only detached and inconſiderable parts of the plan are as yet viſible, and the beauties are every where obſcured by attendant blemiſhes; but his counſel ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure. Princes and ſtateſmen ſeldom think of him, are ſeldom aware, that in proſecuting their own ſchemes, they are eventually fulfilling his purpoſes, and preparing the way to promote the cauſe which they deſpiſe, and often endeavour to ſuppreſs. But thus it is. Sometimes he employs them, more directly, as his inſtruments, and when they are thus engaged in his work, their ſucceſs is ſecured. So Cyrus, whom Iſaiah mentioned by name *, long before his birth, as the appointed deliverer of Iſrael from their captivity, proſpered in his enterprizes, being guided and girded by him whom he knew not, and eſtabliſhed his own power upon the ruins of the Aſſyrian monarchy. The Roman empire likewiſe increaſed and proſpered from ſmall beginnings, that a way might be opened, in the proper ſeaſon, for the deſtruction of the Jewiſh œconomy, and for facilitating the preaching of the goſpel. And poſterity will ſee, that the principal events of the preſent age, in Aſia and America, have all a tendency to bring forward the accompliſhment of my text; and are leading to one

* Iſa. xlv. 1,—5.

one grand point, the ſpreading and eſtabliſhment of the church and kingdom of our Lord. His plan is unalterably fixed. He has ſaid it, and it ſhall be done. Things will not always remain in their preſent diſordered ſtate; and though this deſirable period may be yet at a diſtance, and appearances very dark and unpromiſing, the word of the Lord ſhall prevail over all diſcouragements and oppoſition

Prophecies which are not yet fulfilled will neceſſarily be obſcure. Many learned men have laboured to explain the propheeies in this book, to aſcertain the facts which are foretold, and to fix the dates when they may be expected to take place. But they are ſo divided in their judgments, and with regard to ſeveral of the moſt eminent who thus differ, the ſupport their opinions derive from the character and abilities of the propoſers is ſo nearly equal, that thoſe who conſult them are more likely to be embarraſſed than ſatisfied. For myſelf, I think it becomes me to confeſs my ignorance, and my inability, either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propoſe better of my own. I do not, therefore, undertake to give the preciſe ſenſe of this paſſage, as it ſtands connected with the reſt of the chapter. Nor ſhould I, perhaps, have attempted to preach from it, but upon this occaſion. It is introduced, with great propriety, in the *Meſſiah*, as a cloſe to the ſecond part, which begins with a view of the Lamb of God taking away the ſins of the world, by the power of his prieſtly office; and concludes with an account of his glorious ſucceſs as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

My buſineſs is only to lead you to ſome pleaſing and profitable reflections upon this ſubject, now it comes in my way. There are many prophecies in the Old Teſtament, that ſpeak in magnificent ſtrains of a kingdom, which God would, in his appointed time, eſtabliſh upon the earth; the ſenſe of which is greatly

greatly weakened and narrowed, if reſtrained, as ſome commentators would reſtrain it, to the reſtoration of Iſrael to their own land, from their captivity in Babylon. Yet it muſt be allowed, that the highly figurative language in which many of theſe prophecies are expreſſed, a great part of which cannot be underſtood literally, renders the interpretation difficult.

What we read in the twentieth chapter of this book, of a period in which the ſaints ſhall reign with Chriſt during a thouſand years, has given occaſion to almoſt a thouſand conjectures, concerning a millennian ſtate. Some perſons ſuppoſe, that the preſent frame of nature ſhall be diſſolved and changed, and expect a proper reſurrection of the dead; after which, the Lord will perſonally reign with his people upon the earth, when purified by fire, and reſtored to its primitive perfection and beauty. If ſo, earth will be heaven; for the ſtate of happineſs believers are taught to hope for, depends not upon local circumſtances, but chiefly conſiſts in the enjoyment of his unveiled immediate preſence, and in beholding his glory. Others ſeem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the ſame manner as the Jews formed their expectations of MESSIAH's kingdom. They think that temporal honours, dominion, proſperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers; the very portion which they are now called upon to renounce and deſpiſe. But, as I have hinted, large allowances muſt be made for the metaphorical language of prophecy. We read, that the ſtreets of the New Jeruſalem are paved with gold, and that the twelve gates are twelve pearls *; but no perſon of ſound judgment can ſuppoſe, that this deſcription is to be underſtood ſtrictly, according to the letter. The perſonal preſence of MESSIAH with his people is not neceſſary,

* Rev. xxi. 15, 21.

neceſſary to ſuch degrees of happineſs, as are compatible with the preſent ſtate of mortality and imperfection. It is ſufficient, if he vouchſafes to dwell with them by his Spirit. Much leſs are temporal dominion and wealth neceſſary to the proſperity and honour of his ſpiritual kingdom. But what then are we encouraged to expect, beyond what has been hitherto known, with regard to this point? Let us conſult the ſcriptures, which alone can guide and determine our enquiry. I will ſelect ſome expreſs paſſages, a few out of many which might be adduced, but ſufficient, I hope, by the rules of ſober interpretation, to lead us to a ſatisfactory anſwer.

The glory and happineſs of MESSIAH's kingdom, is deſcribed by the prophets in terms which cannot be juſtly applied to any period of the church already paſt. They ſometimes repreſent it by a variety of beautiful paſtoral images, and ſometimes in plainer language. Thus Iſaiah, *And it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the mountain of the Lord's houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed on the top of the mountains, and ſhall be exalted above the hills; and all nations ſhall flow unto it. And many people ſhall go up and ſay, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion ſhall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem. And he ſhall judge among the nations, and ſhall rebuke many people; and they ſhall beat their ſwords into ploughſhares, and their ſpears into pruning hooks: Nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more**. Again, *The wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them. And the cow and the bear ſhall feed, their young ones ſhall lie down together;*

* Iſ. ii. 2,—4.

together; and the lion ſhall eat ſtraw like the ox. And the ſucking child ſhall play on the hole of the aſp, and the weaned child ſhall put his hand in the cockatrice-den. They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea *. I might likewiſe tranſcribe the whole of the ſixtieth chapter, but ſhall only offer you the latter part of it. *Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, waſting nor deſtruction within thy borders; but thou ſhalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praiſe. The ſun ſhall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightneſs ſhall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord ſhall be unto thee an everlaſting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy ſun ſhall no more go down, neither ſhall thy moon withdraw itſelf: for the Lord ſhall be thine everlaſting light, and the days of thy mourning ſhall be ended. Thy people alſo ſhall be all righteous, they ſhall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one ſhall become a thouſand, and a ſmall one a ſtrong nation: I the Lord will haſten it in his time* †. To the ſame purpoſe the Prophet Ezekiel. *And I will ſet up one ſhepherd over them, and he ſhall feed them, even my ſervant David; and he ſhall be their ſhepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my ſervant David a prince among them, I the Lord have ſpoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cauſe the evil beaſts to ceaſe out of the land; and they ſhall dwell ſafely in the wilderneſs, and ſleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a bleſſing; and I will cauſe the ſhower to come down in his ſeaſon, there ſhall be ſhowers of bleſſing* ‡. And again, *Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon you, and you ſhall be clean: from all your filthineſs and from all your idols will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put*

* Iſ. xi. 6,—9. † Iſ. lx. 18,—22. ‡ Ezek. xxxiv. 23,—26.

put within you, and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you a heart of fleſh. And I will put my ſpirit within you, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them *. *And the deſolate land ſhall be tilled, whereas it lay deſolate in the ſight of all that paſſed by. And they ſhall ſay, This land that was deſolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waſte, and deſolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced and inhabited* †. The Prophet Zechariah ſpeaks to the ſame effect. *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midſt of thee, ſaith the Lord. And many nations ſhall be joined to the Lord in that day, and ſhall be my people; and I will dwell in the midſt of thee; and thou ſhalt know that the Lord of hoſts hath ſent me unto thee. And the Lord ſhall be king over all the earth; in that day there ſhall be one Lord, and his name One* ‡.

Though the promiſes and prophecies of this import, are addreſſed to the church, under the names of Iſrael, Jacob, Zion, or Jeruſalem, we are certain they were not fulfilled to the nation of Iſrael while their civil government ſubſiſted. Their national proſperity and glory were greatly diminiſhed before any of theſe prophecies were revealed. They were an inconſtant and a ſuffering people, during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Iſrael, till at length their city and temple were deſtroyed by the Chaldeans. And though they returned from their captivity, and their city and temple were rebuilt, they continued tributary and dependent, and were ſucceſſively ſubject to the Perſian, Macedonian, and Roman power. Their obſtinate rejection and crucifixion of MESSIAH, filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermoſt. They were ſoon afterwards exterminated from their land, their conſtitution, both of church and ſtate, utterly ſubverted; and they

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25,—27. † Ver. 34, 35. ‡ Zech. ii. 10, 11. xiv. 9.

they remain, to this day, in a diſperſed ſtate, which renders the obſervance of their law impracticable.

It ſeems equally plain, that theſe prophecies have not yet been fulfilled to the Chriſtian church. The greater part of the earth, to this day, is unacquainted with the name of Jeſus. And the general face of Chriſtendom, whether in Popiſh or in Proteſtant countries, exhibits little more of the ſpirit and character of the goſpel, than is to be found among the Heathens. If Chriſtianity be compatible with pride or baſeneſs, with avarice or profuſion, with malice and envy, with ſcepticiſm in principle and licentiouſneſs of conduct, then Chriſtians abound: but if humility, integrity, benevolence, and a ſpiritual mind, are eſſential to a Chriſtian; if we judge by the criterion which our Lord himſelf appointed, and account only thoſe his diſciples who live in the exerciſe of mutual love, it is to be feared that they are but few, even in the places which are moſt favoured with the light of the goſpel. But can the Scriptures be broken? Can the promiſes of the Lord fail? By no means. *Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but not one jot or tittle* of his word ſhall fail of accompliſhment.

It is not neceſſary to ſuppoſe that every individual of mankind ſhall be ſavingly converted to the Lord in this future day of his power; but I apprehend the current language of the prophecies warrants us to hope, that the prayers and deſires of the church ſhall, in ſome future period, be ſignally anſwered, in the following reſpects.

1 That the goſpel ſhall viſit the nations which are at preſent involved in darkneſs. The Heathen are given to MESSIAH for *his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion.* At preſent (as I have formerly obſerved *) if the whole of Chriſtendom were inhabited by real Chriſtians, they would bear but a ſmall proportion to the reſt of mankind. Large

* Page 64.

Large countries in Europe, Aſia, and Africa, where the goſpel was once known, have been for many ages involved in Mohammedan darkneſs. The ſcattered remnants of the Greek church in Turkey are ſo miſerably depraved and ignorant, that they ſcarcely deſerve to be mentioned as an exception. The reſt of Aſia knows little of Chriſtianity, unleſs they have learnt it in the eaſtern parts from the cruelty and tyranny of men who bear the name of Chriſtians. The like may be ſaid of America, excepting the northern provinces of our late dominion there. For the zeal of the Spaniards and Portugueſe has produced few other effects than rapine, ſlavery, and deluges of human blood. The interior parts, both of Africa and America, are unknown. The countries and iſlands lately diſcovered in the ſouthern hemiſphere, are left, as they were found, in groſs ignorance. The exertions of our navigators to ſupply them with ſheep and cows, and uſeful implements, from Europe, were humane and laudable. But it does not appear that the leaſt attempt was made to impart to them the knowledge of our holy religion. The only miſſionary they have from us, (if he be yet living), is the much ſpoken of Omiah. This man was brought to England, almoſt from the Antipodes; he ſpent ſome time amongſt us, and was then ſent back to tell his countrymen what he had ſeen and heard. But if he gave a faithful account of our cuſtoms, morals, and religion, ſo far as they fell within the circle of his own obſervations, the relation would certainly be little to our honour, and I am afraid much to their hurt. In brief, a large part of Europe, almoſt the whole of the other three continents, with the iſlands in the Eaſtern and Southern Oceans, are deſtitute of the true goſpel. But there is a time approaching, called the fulneſs of the Gentiles, when the Redeemer's glory ſhall dawn and ſhine upon all nations. And though we cannot ſee when or how

this happy change ſhall be effected, yet, in the Lord's hour, mountains ſhall ſink into plains. Nor is it more improbable to us now, than it would have ſeemed to an inhabitant of Rome in the time of Julius Cæſar, that the iſland of Great Britain ſhould one day be diſtinguiſhed by all thoſe privileges which the Providence of God has ſince beſtowed upon it.

2. That this goſpel ſhall prevail, *not in word only, but in power.* Even where the name of Chriſt is profeſſed, but little of the power of it is at preſent known. The ſuperſtition and falſe worſhip generally prevalent within the pale of the Roman and Greek churches, may be mentioned without offence to Proteſtants. But the bulk of the Proteſtant countries are equally overſpread with ſcepticiſm and wickedneſs. Few comparatively, among Proteſtants, are friendly to that goſpel which the apoſtles preached; and much fewer are they who are influenced by it. Perhaps no nation is favoured with greater advantages for knowing the truth than our nation, nor any city more favoured than this city. I doubt not but there are perſons now living, who would have been thought eminent Chriſtians, if they had lived in the firſt and happieſt age of the church; and I truſt their number is greater than we are aware of. The Lord has a hidden people, little known to the world, or to each other. But if we judge by the ſtandard of truth, we muſt acknowledge that the power of religious profeſſion is very low. How little does it appear in the lives, tempers, and purſuits of the moſt who hear the goſpel? But the time will come when Chriſtians ſhall again be known by their integrity, ſpiritual-mindedneſs, and benevolence, and by all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are, by Jeſus Chriſt, to the glory and praiſe of God. The fall of myſtical Babylon, and of Antichriſt, in its various forms, and the calling of the Jews, are events which are poſitively foretold, and which, when they come

to

to paſs, will have great effects. Zion, as yet, is only building, but it ſhall be built.

3 That the animoſities and diſputes which prevail among Chriſtians ſhall ceaſe. The obſervation of a late ingenious writer, which, it is to be feared, he was confirmed in by his own experience, is too much founded in truth.—" We have juſt religion enough " to make us hate one another." The ſpirit of party, prejudice, bigotry, and intereſt, a zeal for ſyſtems, forms, modes, and denominations, furniſh men with plauſible pretences for indulging their unſanctified paſſions, and deceive them into an opinion, that while they are gratifying their pride and ſelf-will, they are only labouring to promote the cauſe of God and truth. Hence often the feuds which obtain among religious people are purſued with greater violence, and to greater lengths, and are productive of more miſchievous conſequences, than the quarrels of drunkards. The lovers of peace, who refuſe to take a part in theſe contentions, but rather weep over them in ſecret, are cenſured and deſpiſed as neutrals and cowards, by the angry combatants on all ſides, while the world deſpiſes and laughs at them all. It was not ſo in the beginning, nor will it be ſo always. The hour is coming, when believers ſhall be united in love, ſhall agree in all that is eſſential to a life of faith and holineſs, and ſhall live in the exerciſe of forbearance and tenderneſs towards each other, if, in ſome points of ſmaller importance, they cannot think exactly alike; which poſſibly may be the caſe in the beſt times, in the preſent imperfect ſtate of human nature. *Ephraim then ſhall no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim* *.

4. That it will be a time of general peace. At preſent, the kingdoms, which, by their profeſſion, ſhould be ſubjects of the Prince of Peace, are perpetually diſturbing, invading, and deſtroying each

* Iſ. xi. 13.

other. They live in habits of mutual fear and jealouſy, and maintain great armies on all ſides; that each nation may be prepared, if occaſion offers, to ſtrike the firſt blow. War is followed as a trade, and cultivated as a ſcience; and they who, with the greateſt diligence and ſucceſs, ſpread devaſtation and ruin far and wide, and deluge the earth with human blood, acquire the title of heroes and conquerors. Can there be a ſtronger confirmation of what we read in ſcripture concerning the depravity of man? Can we conceive an employment more ſuited to gratify the malignity of Satan and the powers of darkneſs, if they were permitted to appear and act amongſt us in human ſhapes? Could ſuch enormities poſſibly obtain, if the mild and merciful ſpirit of the goſpel generally prevailed? But it ſhall prevail at laſt, and then *the nations ſhall learn war no more* *.

How tranſporting the thought! that a time ſhall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteouſneſs, ſhall obtain through the earth. The evils (and theſe are the greateſt evils of human life) which men bring upon themſelves, and upon each other, by their wickedneſs, ſhall ceaſe; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's diſpleaſure, by ſuch public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, peſtilence, and famine. And if ſome natural evils, as pain and ſickneſs, ſhould remain, ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and the compaſſion and tenderneſs of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this proſpect be deſirable to us, ſurely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be enquired of by his people for the performance.

But to many perſons the extenſion of dominion and commerce appears much more deſirable. The glory and extent

* Iſ. ii. 4.

extent of the Britiſh government has been eagerly purſued; and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the converſion of the Heathens, are conſidered by the *Politicians* and *Merchants* of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their notice, or rather as obſtacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is ſaid of MESSIAH, and of his church, *The nation and kingdom that will not ſerve thee ſhall periſh* *. The word of God may be ſlighted, but it cannot be annulled; and it is more a ſubject for lamentation than wonder, that our national proſperity ſhould decline, when we are indifferent, yea, adverſe to that cauſe which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and eſtabliſh.

* Iſ. lx. 12.

SERMON XXXVIII.

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

REV. xix. 16.

[*And he hath on his veſture, and on his thigh, a name written*], KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

THE deſcription of the adminiſtration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all oppoſition, concludes the ſecond part of the *Meſſiah*. Three different paſſages from this book are ſelected to form a grand chorus, of which his title in this verſe is the cloſe; a title which has been ſometimes vainly uſurped by proud worms of the earth. Eaſtern monarchs, in particular, have affected to ſtyle themſelves King of kings, and Lord of lords. In the ſcriptural language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potſherds of the earth; but they are by nature ſo ſtrongly infected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour anſwerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon the divine prerogative. Thus ſovereignty, majeſty, holineſs, and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the *Great*. But let the *great* and the *mighty* know, that wherein they ſpeak proudly, MESSIAH is above them. The whole verſe (of which the latter clauſe only is in the Oratorio) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is repreſented *as wearing his title.* It is written, or inſcribed, upon his veſture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh; either upon that part of his

his veſture which covers his thigh, or upon the upper part of his veſture, and upon his thigh likewiſe.

II. The title itſelf, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind poſſeſs, is derived from him, and abſolutely ſubject to his controul.

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his veſture, and upon his thigh.

1. This name being written upon his *veſture*, denotes the manifeſtation and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the veſture ſtained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the ſucceſs of his great undertaking. In the paſſage from whence this verſe is ſelected, there are three names attributed to MESSIAH. He has *a name which no one knows but himſelf* *, agreeable to what he declared when upon earth. No man, οὐδεὶς, no one (neither man nor angel) knoweth the Son, but the Father; this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A ſecond name, *The Word of God* †, denotes the myſtery of the divine perſonality. The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when he reſumed it from the grave, became the ſeat of all power and authority; which power we are now taught to conſider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it eſſentially belongs, but as the power of God exerciſed in and by that Man who died upon the croſs for our ſins. In conſequence of his obedience unto death, he received *a name which is above every name* ‡. This inſcription his own people read by the eye of faith in the preſent life, and it inſpires them with confidence and joy, under the many tribulations they paſs through in the courſe of their

* Ver. 12. † Ver. 13. ‡ Phil. ii. 9.

profeſſion. Hereafter it ſhall be openly known, and read by all men. Every eye ſhall ſee it, and every heart muſt either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his *thigh*. The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on whic the ſword is girded *. By this emblem we are taught, that he will aſſuredly maintain and exerciſe the right which he has acquired. As he has a juſt claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are *merely* titular. So the King of Great Britain is ſtyled likewiſe King of France, though he has neither authority nor poſſeſſions in that kingdom. But this name which MESSIAH bears is full of life, truth, and influence. He is ſtyled *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, becauſe he really is ſo; becauſe he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleaſure *in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*, with an abſolute and uncontroulable ſway, *ſo that none can ſay his hand, or ſay unto him, What doeſt thou* †?

II. The title itſelf is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. He is the *Prince of the kings of the earth* ‡. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counſel together, and ſet themſelves againſt him ‖, ſaying, *Let us break his bands aſunder*. But *he ſitteth in the heavens, and has them in deriſion*. He has his hook in their noſe, and his bridle in their lips, and the reſult of all their contrivances is neither more nor leſs than the accompliſhment of his will.

1. The rage they diſcover, and the reſiſtance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be aſked, Why does he permit them to reſiſt? we may give an anſwer in point from the caſe of Pharaoh. He reſiſted, and he periſhed. He was often warned and rebuked, but he ſtill hardened his neck, and continued ſtubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was deſtroyed without

* Pſ. xlv. 3. † Dan. iv. 35. ‡ Rev. i. 5. ‖ Pſ. ii. 4.

without remedy. Thus the God of Iſrael was more magnified, and the people of Iſrael were more honoured, in the view of the ſurrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a ſtretched-out arm, and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the caſe would have admitted, if Pharaoh had made no oppoſition to their departure. Yet the obſtinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are aſſured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to ſuppoſe that God is the author of the ſin, which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man* *, and the ſcripture is to be interpreted conſiſtently with itſelf. It would be abſurd to aſcribe darkneſs or ice to the agency of the ſun, though both inevitably follow, if the light and heat of the ſun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is neceſſary to keep water in that ſtate of fluidity which we commonly ſuppoſe eſſential to its nature; but it is rather eſſential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is neceſſary to preſerve it in a fluid ſtate; and the hardeſt metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increaſed. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is ſoft and impreſſive, capable of feeling and tenderneſs, we muſt attribute it to the ſecret influence of the Father and Fountain of Light; and if he is pleaſed to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually diſturbing the world with their ſchemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have ſeldom any higher end in view, than the gratification of their own paſſions. But in all they do they are but ſervants of this great King and Lord, and fulfil

* James i. 13.

his purpoſes, as the inſtruments he employs to inflict preſcribed puniſhment upon tranſgreſſors againſt him, or to open a way for the ſpread of his goſpel. Thus, under the Old-Teſtament diſpenſation, (for he was King from everlaſting), the ſucceſſes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus, were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an axe or a ſaw in the hand of the workman *. And they acted under a limited commiſſion, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when *his* deſign was accompliſhed, we hear of *them* no more. Time would not ſuffice, were I to adduce the many ſtriking inſtances of the like kind which offer to obſervation from the peruſal of modern hiſtory. It is well known, with reſpect to that great event, the Reformation from Popery in the ſixteenth century, and eſpecially in our own land, that many of the principal perſons who contributed to its eſtabliſhment hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy, engaged them in ſuch meaſures, as the King of kings over-ruled to produce conſequences which they neither intended nor could foreſee; and which, when they did apprehend, they would have prevented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection on the late American war: in the origin and progreſs of which, there was ſuch an evident diſproportion between the apparent cauſes, and the effects produced by them; between the firſt deſigns and expectations of the principal actors on both ſides, and the final event; that I think they who do not perceive a ſuperintending Providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to ſtill greater and more important revolutions, muſt be quite at a loſs to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foreſight.

3. That

* K. x. 15.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is farther evident from the preſervation of his people; for the world is againſt them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the ſea, has bounds preſcribed to it which it cannot paſs. So far as he is pleaſed to over-rule it to his own praiſe, he will permit it to operate; but the remainder, that is not ſubſervient to the accompliſhment of his purpoſe, he will reſtrain *. But he works ſo ſecretly, though powerfully, by the agency of ſecond cauſes, that only they who are enlightened by his word and Spirit can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counſel to Abſalom, which, though wicked, was, in the political ſenſe of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious ſon. David had prayed that the Lord would *turn Ahithophel's counſel into fooliſhneſs* †. Had the Lord inſtantly deprived Ahithophel of his reaſon, this prayer would have been more viſibly, but not more effectually anſwered, than by the counter-advice of Huſhai, which, though raſh and extravagant, being ſuited to gratify the vanity and folly of Abſalom ‡, rendered the other abortive. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themſelves, and then one party, to mortify and oppoſe the other, will protect thoſe whom otherwiſe they wiſh to deſtroy. Thus Paul eſcaped from the malice of the Jewiſh council, by the ſudden diſagreement which aroſe between the Phariſees and Sadducees ‖, though they came together equally determined to deſtroy him. At other times, kings and ſtateſmen act ſo inconſiſtently with their profeſſed aims, and take ſteps ſo directly calculated to prevent what they wiſh to obtain, or to bring upon

 themſelves

* Pſ. lxxvi. 10. † 2 Sam. xv. 31. ‡ 2 Sam. xvii. 14.
‖ Acts xxiii. 7.

themſelves what they mean to avoid, that we can only ſay, they are infatuated. A very ſmall compliance ſeemed likely to have ſecured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to ſpeak mildly to the people for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his ſervants for ever. But when we read that the cauſe was from the Lord *, and that, in this way, his purpoſe of ſeparating the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah was effected, the wonder ceaſes. Very obſervable, likewiſe, was the coincidence of circumſtances which preſerved the Jews in Perſia from the deſtructive deſigns of their adverſary Haman. If the † king had ſlept that night, as-uſual, or if his attendants had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that Chronicle but the very paſſage in which the ſervice of Mordecai had been recorded, humanly ſpeaking, Haman would have carried his point. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumſtances, each of them, if conſidered ſingly, apparently trivial, and all of them contingent with reſpect to any human foreſight or prevention, the Lord often pours contempt upon the wiſe and the mighty, and defeats their deepeſt laid and beſt concerted ſchemes, in the moment when they promiſe themſelves ſucceſs.

Many ſalutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the conſideration of this ſubject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It ſhould inſpire us with *confidence*. If the Lord of hoſts, the Lord of lords, be for us, what weapon or counſel can proſper againſt us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God. The concernments of his church are in ſafe hands. The cauſe ſo dear to

* 1 Kings xii. 15. † Eſther vi. 1.

to us, is ſtill more dear to him. He has power to ſupport it when it is oppoſed, and grace to revive it when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never ſhall be forſaken. When he will work, none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourſelf, if you have committed yourſelf and your all to him. *The very hairs of your head are numbered* *. There is a hedge of protection † around you, which none can break through without his permiſſion; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he deſigns to make a temporary and ſeeming evil conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It ſhould affect us with an admiring and thankful ſenſe of *his condeſcenſion*. *Lord, what is man, that thou ſhou'deſt be ſo mindful of him? He humbles himſelf to behold the things that are in heaven* ‡. But he ſtoops ſtill lower. He affords his attention and favour to ſinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a ſigh or falling tear eſcapes his notice. He pities them, as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their ſtrength, or their ſtrength to their trials, and ſo adjuſts his diſpenſations to their ſtate, that they never ſuffer unneceſſarily, nor in vain.

3. *How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers.* Is the man congratulated or envied whom the king delighteth to honour? Believers are more frequently deſpiſed than envied in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleaſures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the *ſons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty* ‖. Their poſſeſſions are great, for *all things are theirs* §; They are aſſured of what is beſt for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter.

* Matt. x. 30. † Job i. 10. ‡ Pſal. cxiii. 6.
‖ 2 Cor. vi. 18. § 1 Cor. iii. 21.

ter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and ſhall ere long be acknowledged and owned by him, before aſſembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be aſtoniſhed and confounded when they ſhall ſee the righteous, whom they once undervalued, *ſhine forth like the ſun in the kingdom of God.*

4. We may laſtly infer the extreme folly and danger of thoſe who perſiſt in their rebellion and oppoſition againſt this King of kings, and Lord of lords. Though he exerciſes much patience and long-ſuffering towards them for a ſeaſon, the hour is approaching when his wrath will burn like fire. It is written, and muſt be fulfilled, *the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God* *. Oh the ſolemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature ſhall be diſſolved, when the Judge ſhall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind ſhall be ſummoned to his tribunal! Will not you yet tremble and bow before him, ye careleſs ones, while he is ſeated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of mercy ſtands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent, and believe the goſpel. If to-day you will hear his voice, it is not yet too late. But who can anſwer for to-morrow? Perhaps *this night your ſoul may be required of you* †. Are you prepared for the ſummons? If not, ſeize the preſent opportunity. Attend to the *one thing needful.* Seek his face, that your ſoul may live. If not, remember that you are warned; your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our meſſage, and if you finally reject it, you muſt anſwer for yourſelves to him whoſe meſſage it is.

* Pſal. ix. 17. † Luke xii. 20.

PART

PART III.

SERMON XXXIX.

Job's Faith and Expectation.

JOB xix. 25, 26.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my ſkin, worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God.

CHRISTIANITY, that is, the religion of which MESSIAH is the author and object, the foundation, life, and glory, though not altogether as old as the creation, is nearly ſo. It is coeval with the firſt promiſe and intimation of mercy given to fallen man. When Adam by tranſgreſſion had violated the order and law of his creation, his religion, that is, the right diſpoſition of his heart towards God, was at an end. Sin deprived him at once of faith and hope, of love and joy. He no longer deſired, he no longer could bear, the preſence of his offended Maker. He vainly ſought to avoid it; and when compelled to anſwer, though he could not deny his guilt, inſtead of making an ingenuous confeſſion, he attempted to fix the blame upon the woman, or rather indeed upon the Lord himſelf, who had provided her for him. But mercy, undeſerved and undeſired, relieved him from a ſtate in which he was already become obdurate and deſperate. A promiſe was given him of *the ſeed of the woman* *, which virtually contained, as the ſeed contains the future plant, the ſubſtance

* Gen iii. 15.

ſtance of all the ſubſequent promiſes which were fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by all that he did, or ſuffered, or obtained for ſinners, in the character of Mediator. For a ſinner can have no comfortable intercourſe with the holy God, but through a Mediator. Therefore the apoſtle obſerves, of the patriarchs and ſervants of God, under the Old Teſtament, *Theſe all died in faith* *. We can ſay nothing higher than this, of the apoſtles and martyrs under the New Teſtament. They died, not truſting in themſelves that they were righteous, not rejoicing in the works of their own hands; but they died, like the thief upon the croſs, in faith, reſting all their hope upon him, who, by his obedience unto death, *is the end of the law for righteouſneſs unto every one that believeth* †. We have greater advantages, in point of light and liberty, than thoſe of old. The prophecies concerning MESSIAH, which, at the time of delivery, were obſcure, are to us infallibly interpreted by their accompliſhment. And we know that the great atonement, typically pointed out by their ſacrifices, has been actually made; that the Lamb of God has, by the one offering of himſelf, put away ſin. But as to the ground and ſubſtance, their faith and hope were the ſame with ours. *Abraham rejoiced to ſee the day of Chriſt* ‡; and aged Jacob, ſoon after he had ſaid, *I have waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord*, died with the ſame compoſure and willingneſs as Simeon did, who ſaw it with his own eyes. Job, who was perhaps contemporary with Jacob, who at leaſt is, with great probability, thought to have lived before Moſes, gives us in this paſſage a ſtrong and clear teſtimony of *his* faith. And it forms a beautiful and well choſen introduction to the third part of the *Meſſiah*, the principal ſubject of which is, the preſent privileges and future proſpects of thoſe who believe in the Saviour's name.

The

* Heb. xi. 13. † Rom. x. 4. ‡ John viii. 56.

The learned are far from being agreed, either in the tranſlation, or in the explanation, of this text. The words *worms* and *body* being printed in Italics in our verſion, will apprize the attentive Engliſh reader, that there are no words anſwerable to them in the Hebrew. If you omit theſe words, ſomething will be evidently wanting to make a complete ſenſe. This want different writers have ſupplied, according to their different judgments, and from hence chiefly has ariſen the variety of verſions and interpretations. But it would be very improper for me, in this place, to take up your time, and to draw off your attention from the great concerns which ſhould fill our minds when we meet in the houſe of God, by giving you a detail of controverſies and criticiſms, which after all are much more uncertain than important. We need not diſpute, whether Job, in this paſſage, profeſſes his aſſurance of the incarnation of MESSIAH, or of his reſurrection, or of his final appearance to judge the world; or whether he is only declaring his own perſonal faith and hope in him. Theſe ſeveral ſenſes are not ſo diſcordant, that if we determine for one, we muſt exclude the reſt. I ſhall content myſelf with the words as I find them. And I hope, that if we ſhould miſs ſome of the preciſe ideas which Job might have when he ſpoke, we ſhall not greatly miſtake his general meaning, nor wander far wide from the ſcope of the text.

Four things are obſervable,

I. The title of *Redeemer*.

II. The appropriating word, *My*.

III. His ſtanding upon *the earth*.

IV. Job's expectation of ſeeing him *in his fleſh*.

I. The title. There is no name of MESSIAH more ſignificant, comprehenſive, or endearing, than the name REDEEMER. The name of *Saviour* expreſſes what he does for ſinners. He ſaves them from guilt and wrath, from ſin, from the preſent evil world, from

from the powers of darkneſs, and from all their enemies He ſaves them with an everlaſting ſalvation. But the word *Redeemer*, intimates likewiſe the manner in which he ſaves them. For it is not merely by the word of his *power*, as he ſaved his diſciples when in jeopardy upon the lake, by ſaying to the winds and the ſeas, *Peace, be ſtill: and there was a great calm* *; but by *price*, by paying a ranſom for them, and pouring out the blood of his heart, as an atonement for their ſins. The Hebrew word for Redeemer, *Goel*, primarily ſignifies, a near kinſman, or the next of kin; he with whom the right of redemption lay †, and who, by virtue of his nearneſs of relation, was the legal avenger of blood. Thus MESSIAH took upon him our nature, and by aſſuming our fleſh and blood, became nearly related to us, that he might redeem our forfeited inheritance, reſtore us to liberty, and avenge our cauſe againſt Satan, the enemy and murderer of our ſouls. But thus he made himſelf alſo reſponſible for us, to pay our debts, and to anſwer the demands of the juſtice and law of God on our behalf. He fulfilled his engagement. He ſuffered, and he died on this account. But our Redeemer, *who was once dead, is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death, and* of *hades* ‡. This is he of whom Job ſaith, *I know that he liveth*, (was then living), though he was not *to ſtand upon the earth, until the latter day*. He is the living One, having life in himſelf, *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever* ‖. Such was his own language to the Jews, *Before Abraham was, I am* §. Therefore the Redeemer is mighty, and his redemption is ſure. He is *able* to ſave to the uttermoſt. His power is unlimited, and his official authority, as Mediator, is founded in a covenant,

* Mark iv. 39. † Numb. xxxv 19, 21. Ruth iv. 1,—3.
‡ Rev. i. 18. ‖ Heb. xiii. 8. § John viii. 58.

nant, ratified by his own blood, and by the oath of the unchangeable God *.

11 But Job uſes the language of appropriation. He ſays, *My* Redeemer. And all that we know, or hear, or ſpeak of him, will avail us but little, unleſs we are really and perſonally intereſted in him as *Our* Redeemer. A cold ſpeculative knowledge of the goſpel, ſuch as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no farther deſign than to underſtand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither ſave nor comfort the ſoul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the eſtate and all the particulars ſpecified *his own.* He appropriates the privileges to himſelf, and ſays, The promiſes are mine; the pardon, the peace, the heaven, of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and teſtament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Teſtator remembered me in his will, which is confirmed, and rendered valid by his death †, and therefore I humbly claim, and aſſuredly expect, the benefit of all that he has bequeathed. But how ſhall we obtain this comfortable perſuaſion, and preſerve it againſt all the cavils of our enemies, who will endeavour to litigate our right? I ſeem to have before me a proper occaſion of diſcuſſing a point, very important, and by too many miſunderſtood; I mean, the nature of that aſſurance of hope, which the ſcripture ſpeaks of as attainable, which has been happily experienced by many believers, and which all are exhorted and encouraged to ſeek after, in the methods of God's appointment. But my plan will only permit me to offer a few brief hints upon the ſubject.

1. Many reſpectable writers and preachers have conſidered this aſſurance as eſſential to true faith. But we have the ſcripture in our hands, and are not bound

* Pſ. cx. 4. † Heb. ix. 16.

bound to abide by the deciſions of any man, farther than as they agree with this ſtandard. The moſt eminent properties, or effects aſcribed to faith, are, *that it works by love* *, *purifies the heart* †, and *overcomes the world* ‡. I think it cannot eaſily be denied, by thoſe who are competent judges in the caſe, that there are perſons to be found, who give theſe evidences that they are believers, and yet are far from the poſſeſſion of an abiding aſſurance. They hope they love the Lord, but there is ſuch a diſproportion between the ſenſible exerciſe of their love, and the conviction they have of their obligations to him, that they are often afraid they do not love him *ſupremely*; and if not, they know that in the ſcriptural ſenſe they do not love him at all. They can ſay from their hearts that they deſire to love him, but they dare not go farther. But there is a weak and a ſtrong faith; they differ not in kind, but only in degree. Faith is compared to *a grain of muſtard-ſeed* ‖, which, under the cultivation of the heavenly Huſbandman, who firſt ſows the ſeed in the heart, grows up to aſſurance. But in its infant and weak ſtate it is true and acceptable faith. Far from *breaking the bruiſed reed* §, he will ſtrengthen it. *He will not quench the ſmoking flax*, but will in due time fan it into a flame.

2. I will go a ſtep farther. Were I to define the aſſurance we are ſpeaking of, I ſhould perhaps ſay, *It is*, in our preſent ſtate, *the combined effect of faith and ignorance.* That aſſurance which does not ſpring from true faith in the Son of God, wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is no better than preſumption. But I believe what we call *aſſurance*, even when it is right, is not entirely owing to the ſtrength of our faith, but in a great meaſure to our having ſuch faint and ſlight views of ſome truths, which, if we had a more powerful impreſſion of them, unleſs our faith was likewiſe proportionably ſtrengthened

* Gal. v. 6. † Acts xv. 9. ‡ 1 John v. 4. ‖ Matt. xvii. 20. § Iſ. xlii. 3.

ened at the ſame time, might poſſibly make the ſtrongeſt aſſurance totter and tremble. I will explain myſelf. Admitting that I had a right to tell you, that I am ſo far aſſured of my intereſt in the goſpel-ſalvation, as to have no perplexing doubt either of my acceptance or of my perſeverance, you would much over-rate me, if you ſhould ſuppoſe this was a proof that my faith is very ſtrong. Alas! I have but a very ſlight perception of the evil of ſin, of the deceitfulneſs of my own heart, of the force and ſubtlety of my ſpiritual enemies, of the ſtrictneſs and ſpirituality of the holy law, or of the awful majeſty and holineſs of the great God with whom I have to do. If, in the moment while I am ſpeaking to you, he ſhould be pleaſed to impreſs theſe ſolemn realities upon my mind, with a conviction and evidence tenfold greater than I have ever known hitherto, (which I conceive would ſtill be vaſtly ſhort of the truth), unleſs my faith was alſo ſtrengthened by a tenfold clearer and more powerful diſcovery of the grace and glory of the Saviour, you would probably ſee my countenance change and my ſpeech faulter. The Lord, in compaſſion to our weakneſs, ſhews us theſe things, by little and little, as we are able to bear them; and if, as we advance in the knowledge of ourſelves and of our dangers, our knowledge of the unſearchable riches of Chriſt advances equally, we may rejoice in hope, we may even poſſeſs an aſſured hope. But let not him who hath put on his harneſs, boaſt as though he had put it off *. We are yet in an enemy's land, and know not what changes we may meet with, before our warfare is finiſhed.

3. How far our aſſurance is ſolid, may be eſtimated by the effects. It will ſurely make us humble, ſpiritual, peaceful, and patient. I pity thoſe who talk confidently of their hope, as if they were out of the reach of doubts and fears, while their tempers

* 1 Kings xx. 11.

tempers are unſanctified, and their hearts are viſibly attached to the love of the preſent world. I fear they know but little of what they ſay. I am better pleaſed when perſons of this character complain of doubts and darkneſs. It proves at leaſt that they are not deſtitute of feeling, nor, as yet, lulled into a ſpirit of careleſs ſecurity. And there are profeſſors, whom, inſtead of endeavouring to comfort in their preſent ſtate, I would rather wiſh to make ſtill more ſuſpicious of themſelves than they are; till they are convinced of the impoſſibility of enjoying true peace, while their hearts are divided between God and the world. For though ſanctification is not the ground of a good hope, it is the certain concomitant of it. If it be true, *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* *, it muſt likewiſe be true, that without holineſs no man can have a ſcriptural and well-founded hope of ſeeing him.

4. But to give a direct anſwer to the enquiry, How ſhall I know that he is my Redeemer? I may uſe the prophet's words, *Then ſhall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord* †. Our names are not actually inſerted in the Bible, but our characters are deſcribed there. He is the Redeemer of all who put their truſt in him. You *will not* truſt in him, unleſs you feel your need of him; you *cannot*, unleſs you know him, as he is revealed in the word; you *do not*, unleſs you love him, and are devoted to his cauſe and ſervice If you know yourſelf to be a ſinner deſerving to periſh, if you ſee that there is no help or hope for you but in Jeſus, and venture yourſelf upon his gracious invitation, believing that he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt; and if you really include holineſs and a deliverance from ſin, in the idea of the ſalvation which you long for, then he is your Redeemer. If, among us, an act of grace was publiſhed, inviting all criminals to ſurrender themſelves,

* Heb. xii. 14. † Hoſ. vi. 3.

ſelves, with a promiſe of mercy to thoſe who did; though no one was mentioned by name in the act, yet every one who complied with it, and pleaded it, would be entitled to the benefit. Such an act of grace is the goſpel. The Lord ſays, *This is my beloved Son, hear him* *. If you approve him, he is yours. If you are ſtill perplexed with doubts, they are owing to the weakneſs of your faith. But there are means appointed for the growth of faith. Wait patiently upon the Lord in the uſe of thoſe means, and you ſhall find he has not bid you ſeek his face in vain. Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs. Live not in the omiſſion of known duty. Do not perplex yourſelf with vain reaſonings, but believe and obey, and the Lord ſhall be with you. There are ſome peculiar caſes. Allowances muſt be made for the effects of conſtitution and temperament. Some ſincere perſons are beſet and followed, through life, with diſtreſſing temptations. But in general, ſimplicity and obedience lead to aſſurance. And they who hearken to the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments, *go on from ſtrength to ſtrength* †; their peace and hope increaſe, like a river, which, from ſmall beginnings, runs broader and deeper, till it falls into the ocean. But to return to Job—

III. Another article of his creed concerning the Redeemer, is, *He ſhall ſtand in the latter day upon the earth.* The latter or laſt days, in the prophetical ſtyle, uſually denote the MESSIAH's day, the times of the goſpel. To this time Job looked forward. He beheld the promiſes afar off. Thus MESSIAH was the conſolation of his people of old, as he who *was* to come. And it ſhould be our conſolation, to know that he *is* come. His ſtanding upon the earth may include the whole of his appearance in the fleſh; his life, paſſion, and reſurrection. The

* Matt. iii. 17. † Iſa. xlviii. 18.

The manner of expreſſion intimates ſomething important and wonderful. Had Job, in the ſpirit of prophecy, ſpoken of any individual of Adam's race, of Iſaiah, or Paul, there would have been nothing extraordinary predicted by ſaying he ſhall ſtand upon the earth, for all men do ſo in their ſucceſſive generations But that the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, the Maker of all things, ſhould condeſcend to viſit his creatures, to dwell with men for a ſeaſon, to ſtand and walk upon the earth with them, clothed in a body like their own, is an event which never could have been expected, if it had not been revealed from heaven. It was the object of Job's faith, and well deſerving the ſolemn preface with which he introduces his firm perſuaſion of it, *Oh! that my words were graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever!* When Solomon had finiſhed the temple of the Lord of Hoſts, inſtead of admiring the magnificence of the building, he was ſtruck with the condeſcenſion of the Lord, who would vouchſafe to notice it, and honour it with a ſymbol of his preſence. *Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much leſs this houſe which I have built* *? But what was the viſible glory which appeared in that temple, if compared with the glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he tabernacled in our fleſh! The human nature of Chriſt is that true temple, not made with hands, in which God is manifeſted upon a throne of grace, that ſinners may approach him without diſmay, and receive, out of his fulneſs, grace for grace. To him all the prophets gave witneſs, on him the deſire and hope of his people, in all ages, have been fixed. He was to ſtand upon the earth, as Mediator between God and man. And in the ſame office, now he is upon the throne of glory, he is, and will be, admired, adored,

* 1 Kings viii. 27.

red, and truſted in, by all his believing people, to the end of time.

IV. From the Redeemer's appearance upon earth, Job infers the reſtoration and reſurrection of his own body. His trials had been great—bereaved of his children and ſubſtance, afflicted with grievous boils, haraſſed with temptations, reproached by his friends: out of all theſe troubles the Lord his Redeemer delivered him, and his latter days were more proſperous than his beginning. But he knew that he muſt go the way of all the earth, that his body muſt lie in the grave, and return to duſt. But he expected a future time after his diſſolution, when in the fleſh, for himſelf, and with his own eyes, he ſhould ſee God. The expreſſions are ſtrong and repeated. He does not ſpeak the language of heſitation and doubt, but of confidence and certainty. It likewiſe appears that he placed his ultimate happineſs in ſeeing God. His words are not very different from thoſe of the Apoſtle, *When he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is* *. To behold the glory of God, as our Redeemer, to be in a ſtate of favour and communion with him, and, according to the utmoſt capacity of our nature, to be conformed to him in holineſs and love, is that felicity which God has promiſed, and to which all his ſervants aſpire. Some foretaſtes of it they enjoy in the preſent life, which cheer them under their trials, and raiſe them above the grovelling purſuits of thoſe who have their portion only in this world. But their chief poſſeſſion is in hope. They look forward to a brighter period, when they ſhall awaken from the ſleep of death, to *behold his face in righteouſneſs* †. Then, and not till then, they ſhall be completely ſatisfied. The expectation of Job, therefore, affords a ſufficient proof that the doctrines of an immortal ſtate, and of a reſurrection unto

* 1 John iii. 2. † Pſ. xvii. 15.

life, were included in the revelations which God afforded to his people in the earlieſt times, and, conſequently, that the religion of the Old Teſtament and of the New is ſubſtantially the ſame.

The great inquiry this ſubject ſhould impreſs upon us, is, are we thus minded? What think you, my dear friends, of Chriſt? Have you accepted him as your Redeemer; and have you a good hope that you ſhall ſee him to your comfort, when he ſhall return to judge the world? If ſo, you may rejoice. Changes you muſt expect. You muſt die, and your fleſh muſt be food for worms. But he has promiſed to *change our vile bodies, that they may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf* *.

* Phil. iii. 21.

SER-

SERMON XL.

The Lord is riſen indeed.

1 Cor. xv. 20.

But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and become the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept.

AS, in the animal œconomy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally neceſſary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot ſay that either of them is more eſſentially requiſite than the other; ſo, in the ſyſtem of divine revelation, there are ſome truths, the knowledge and belief of which, ſingly conſidered, are fundamentals with reſpect to the ſalvation of a ſinner. And though they are diſtinct in themſelves, we cannot determine which of them is of moſt importance to us; for unleſs we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for inſtance, is the ſcriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature. This is a firſt principle; for unleſs we underſtand what our ſtate is in the ſight of God, the enormity of our tranſgreſſions, and our incapacity for true happineſs, until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly underſtand a ſingle chapter in the Bible. Such, likewiſe, is the doctrine of the atonement. For, if we could know how totally we are loſt, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we muſt unavoidably ſink into deſpair. Again, if we were ſenſible of our ſtate as ſinners, and even if we truſted in Chriſt for ſalvation, yet the apoſtle obſerves in this

chapter, that unleſs he be indeed riſen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain, and we ſhould ſtill be in our ſins. The reſurrection of Chriſt, therefore, is a doctrine abſolutely eſſential to our hope and comfort; and it is likewiſe a ſure pledge, that they who believe in him ſhall be raiſed from the dead alſo, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For *now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and is become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.* Let us at preſent conſider his reſurrection—The ſure conſequence of it, that his people ſhall be raiſed from the dead, will offer to our meditations from the following verſes.

The reſurrection of Chriſt being, as a fact, the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Chriſtianity reſt, it has pleaſed the Lord to put the indubitable proof of it within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninſpired hiſtory ſo certainly and unqueſtionably authenticated. It may ſeem unneceſſary to prove it, and to many of you it is entirely ſo. Yet I think it proper to take ſome notice of it; not ſo much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the ſake of perſons who may be aſſaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the ſubtilties of ſceptics, are ſometimes peſtered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps more ſhrewd and powerful than ſuch as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffeehouſes. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and, if permitted, will, work powerfully upon this evil diſpoſition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of ſcripture, and of this among the reſt. And many perſons, who have been ſo well convinced that our Lord roſe from the dead, as to venture their ſouls and their all upon it, have found themſelves at a loſs how

how to anſwer the enemy in an hour of ſharp and preſſing temptation.

Let us ſuppoſe, then, that we had lately received the news of ſome extraordinary and almoſt incredible event, and let us conſider what evidence we ſhould require to ſatisfy us that the report was true, and apply the ſame kind of reaſoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a perſon named Jeſus, who gathered diſciples, and died upon a croſs, is univerſally acknowledged. Both Jews and heathens, who lived at the time, and afterwards, not only admitted it, but urged it as a reproach againſt his followers. Many teſtimonies of this kind are ſtill extant.

The turning point between his enemies and his friends is *his reſurrection.* This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly after he aroſe, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he ſhewed himſelf, and ſatisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the ſame perſon whom they had ſeen crucified. They reported what they ſaw, and we believe their report. We are therefore to enquire, Who they were? and on what grounds we receive and rely upon their teſtimony?

If they were miſtaken themſelves, or if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty deſign of impoſing upon mankind, we, who depend upon their relation, may be involved in their miſtake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of theſe ſuppoſitions can poſſibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witneſſes; then we are not only juſtified in giving credit to their teſtimony, but it muſt be unreaſonable, and (in a caſe of this importance) preſumptuous, and dangerous to reject it.

I. That they were competent judges of what they aſſerted, is evident,

1. *From their numbers.* The eye-witnesses of this fact were many. *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also* *. Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw no otherwise than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persons would appropriate the word *demonstration* to *mathematical* evidence, yet *moral* evidence may be in many cases equally conclusive, and compel assent with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities as Paris or Rome, though I never saw them, that I am no more able seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid which I have seen demonstrated.

2. *From the nature of the fact*, in which it was not possible that so many persons could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others was attended with peculiar striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom our Lord had shewn himself. He would see for himself; he required more than ocular proof; for he said, *Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his*

* 1 Cor. xv. 5,—8.

his side, I will not believe *. It is no wonder, that when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy addressed his risen Saviour in the language of adoration and love, *My Lord, and my God!* But his former conduct shewed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses. There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For,

1. If we judge of them by their writings, we must at least allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts were evidently suited to answer their design. The penmen of the New Testament were confessedly men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations, till they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate upon their fellow-creatures such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should be impostors themselves? Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion, and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidly and successfully in a few years throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morali-

* John xx. 25.

ty, ſo vaſtly ſuperior to the united endeavours of the philoſophers of all ages? A learned man in France attempted to prove (for what will not learned men attempt?) that moſt of the Latin poems which are attributed to thoſe whom we call the Claſſic writers, and particularly the Æneid of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whoſe names they bear, but groſs forgeries, fabricated by monks in the dark ages of ignorance, and ſucceſsfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till *he* aroſe to detect the impoſture. He gained but few proſelytes to his abſurd paradox. Yet, to ſuppoſe that men who could only expreſs their own dull ſentiments in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Virgil, when they undertook to impoſe upon the world; or to affirm that the *Principia* of Sir Iſaac Newton was in reality written by an ignorant plowman, and only ſent abroad under the ſanction of a celebrated name, cannot be more repugnant to true taſte, ſound judgment, and common ſenſe, than to imagine, that the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles were, from their own reſources, capable of writing ſuch a book as the New Teſtament; the whole of which muſt ſtand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's reſurrection.

2. But farther, They could not poſſibly propoſe any advantage to themſelves in their endeavours to propagate the Chriſtian religion, if they had not been aſſured that the crucified Jeſus, whom they preached, was riſen from the dead, and had taken poſſeſſion of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a conſtraining ſenſe of his love, and depending upon his promiſe and power to ſupport them in the ſervice to which he had called them, they were neither aſhamed nor afraid to proclaim his goſpel, and to invite and enjoin ſinners every where to put their truſt in him; otherwiſe they had nothing to expect but ſuch treatment as they actually

ly met with, for professing their belief of his resurrection, and especially for the pains they took to publish it, first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks*. They were in fact despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went; and those who espoused their cause were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostors there have been many; but we cannot conceive that any set of men would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could for a moment suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking, as, under pretence of the service of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falsehood, it would be impossible upon that ground to account for the success which they met with. If this counsel and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought†. But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes into the belief of their doctrine against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their word with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus were numerous, notorious, and undeniable; and the moral effects of their preaching, though too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such as can only be with reason ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of Paganism, the superstitions

* 1 Cor. i. 23. † Acts v. 38.

of idol worſhip, though in every country connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration than for reaſons of ſtate, were very ſoon ſhaken, and in no great ſpace of time ſubverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had deſcribed the Chriſtians as the objects of univerſal contempt and hatred, Chriſtianity became the eſtabliſhed religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the ſubject, we have indiſputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and perſecuted, as the Chriſtians were, their religion ſo greatly prevailed, that in many places the idol temples were almoſt deſerted.

4. But the proof of the reſurrection of Chriſt, which is the moſt important and ſatisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and hiſtorical evidence, with which multitudes of true Chriſtians are unacquainted, but is, in its own nature, equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the goſpel to be the power of God to the ſalvation of their ſouls, have the witneſs in themſelves; and are very ſure that the doctrine, which enlightened their underſtandings, awakened their conſciences, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of ſin, brought them into a ſtate of peace and communion with God, and inſpired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, muſt be true. They know that the Lord is riſen indeed, becauſe they are made partakers of the power of his reſurrection, and have experienced a change in themſelves, which could only be wrought by the influence of that holy Spirit which Jeſus is exalted to beſtow. And many believers, though not qualified to diſpute with philoſophers and ſceptics upon their own learned ground, can put them to ſhame and to ſilence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulneſs under afflictions,

tions; and would especially silence them, if they were eye-witnesses of the composure and elevation of spirit with which true believers in a risen Saviour welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence which I would principally recommend to my hearers to seek after. If the resurrection of Christ be a truth and a fact, much depends upon the right belief of it. I say *a right belief;* for though I have offered you a brief view of the external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews or Mohammedans. If I should ask you, Believest thou the resurrection? Might I not answer myself, as the Apostle did on another occasion, *I know that thou believest* *? But so powerful is the effect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance, Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live, as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case—If Christ be risen from the dead, according to the scriptures, then all that the scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead, then he is the Lord of the dead and of the living—then he has the keys of death and hades—then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tribunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord

* Acts xxvi. 27.

of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him. Your Lord who was dead, is alive, and *because he liveth, you shall live also. If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God.* And, *when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

SER.

SERMON XLI.

Death by Adam, Life by Chriſt.

1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.

FROM Mr Handel's acknowledged abilities as a compoſer, and particularly from what I have heard of his great taſte and ſucceſs in adapting the ſtyle of his muſic to the ſubject, I judge, that this paſſage afforded him a fair occaſion of diſplaying his genius and powers. Two ideas, vaſtly important in themſelves, are here repreſented in the ſtrongeſt light, by being placed in contraſt to each other. Surely the moſt ſolemn, the moſt pathetic ſtrains muſt be employed, if they accord with the awful words, *By man came death, in Adam all die.* Nor can even the higheſt efforts of the heavenly harpers, more than anſwer, to the joy, the triumph, and the praiſe, which the other part of my text would excite in our hearts, if we are intereſted in it, provided we were capable of comprehending the full force and meaning of the expreſſions, *By man came alſo the reſurrection, in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.*

By one man came death. *By one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin* *. Sin opened the door to death. The creation, at the beginning, was full of order and beauty. *God ſaw every thing that he had made, and behold all was very good* †. Adam, happy

* Rom. v. 12. † Gen. i. 31.

happy in the image and favour of his Maker, breathed the air of immortality in paradiſe. While moral evil was unknown, natural evils, ſuch as ſickneſs, pain, and death, had no place. How different has the ſtate of things been ſince! Would you account for the change? Charge it upon man. He ſinned againſt his Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor, and thus, by him, came death. The fact is ſure; and therefore our reaſonings upon it, in order to account for it, farther than we are enlightened and taught by ſcripture, are unneceſſary and vain. God is infinitely wiſe, and therefore this change was foreſeen by him. He doubtleſs could have prevented it, for to Omnipotence every thing that does not imply a contradiction is poſſible, is eaſy. But he permitted it, and therefore it muſt have been agreeable to his wiſdom, holineſs, and goodneſs, to permit it. He can over-rule it to the purpoſes of his own glory, and to ends worthy of himſelf, and he has aſſured us that he will do ſo. Thus far I can go, nor do I wiſh to go farther. An endeavour to vindicate the ways of God to man, to fallen man, upon the grounds of what he proudly calls his reaſon, would be an impracticable, and, in my view, a preſumptuous attempt. In proportion as his grace enlightens our minds, convinces us of our ignorance, and humbles our pride, we ſhall be ſatisfied, that in whatever he appoints or permits, he acts in a manner becoming his own perfections. Nor can we be ſatisfied in any other way. We ſee, we feel, that evil is in the world. Death reigns. It has pleaſed God to afford us a revelation, to viſit us with the light of his goſpel. If, inſtead of reaſoning, we believe and obey, a way is ſet before us, by which we may finally overcome every evil, and obtain a happineſs and honour, ſuperior to what belonged to man in his original ſtate. They who refuſe this goſ-

pel,

pel, must be left to their cavils and perplexities, until the day in which the great Judge and Governor of all shall arise to plead his own cause, and to vindicate his proceedings from their arrogant exceptions. *Then every mouth will be stopped* *. Let us look to the heavens, which are higher than we; and attend to what we may learn from sure principles, that the earth, with all its inhabitants, is but as dust upon the balance, if compared with the immensity of God's creation. Unless we could know the whole, and the relation which this very small part bears to the rest of his government, we must be utterly incompetent to judge how it becomes the great God to act. We are infected with the sin, and we are subject to the death, with all its concomitant evils, which came into the world by the first man. But we are likewise invited to a participation of all the blessings which the second Man has procured, by his atonement for sin, and by his victory over death. *For as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead.*

Let us take a survey, first of the malady, and then of the remedy.

I. The malady, the effect and wages of sin is *death*. Many ideas are included in this word, taken in the scriptural sense.

1. The sentence annexed to the transgression of that commandment which was given as an especial test of Adam's obedience, and which affects all his posterity, is thus expressed, '*In the day that thou eatest—thou shalt surely die* †. But man was not, ordinarily, to die by a stroke of apoplexy, or by a flash of lightning. The sentence includes all the natural evils, all the variety of woe, which sin has brought into the world. The rebellious tempers and appetites which so often cut short the life of man, together with the sufferings and troubles which, sooner or later,

* Job. xxxv. 5. † Gen. ii. 17.

ter, bring him down with ſorrow to the grave, being the conſequences of ſin, may be properly conſidered as belonging to that death in which they terminate. Even the earth and the elements partook in the effects of man's diſobedience. Thorns and thiſtles * were not the produce of the ground till after he had ſinned. Nor can I ſuppoſe that hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes, were known in a ſtate of innocence. But had the whole earth been a paradiſe, man, having ſinned, muſt have been miſerable. It is not in ſituation to make that heart happy, which is the ſeat of inordinate paſſions, rage, envy, malice, luſt, and avarice. And were the earth a paradiſe now, it would be ſtained with blood, and filled with violence, cruelty, and miſery, while it is inhabited by ſinners. Many perſons at preſent, who dwell in ſtately houſes, and have every thing around them that is ſuited to gratify and pleaſe their ſenſes, know by painful experience, how little happineſs theſe external advantages afford, while their minds are tortured with diſappointments and anxiety. Thus the outward afflictions which every where ſurround and aſſail the ſinner, and the malignant paſſions, which, like vultures, continually gnaw his heart, all combine to accelerate the execution of the ſentence of death.

2. *Death*, in a very important ſenſe, entered immediately with ſin. Beſides the rational life which ſtill diſtinguiſhes man from the brute creation, he originally poſſeſſed a ſpiritual and divine life; for he was created in the image of God, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. He was capable of communion with God, of rejoicing in his favour, and of propoſing his will and glory as the great end of his actions. In a word, the preſence and life of God dwelt in him, as in a temple. As the ſoul is the life of the body, which becomes a carcaſe, a prey to worms and putrefaction, when the ſoul has forſaken it;

* Gen. iii. 18.

it; ſo God is the life of the ſoul. Sin defaced his temple, and he forſook it. In this ſenſe, when Adam had tranſgreſſed the law, he died inſtantly, in that very day, in that very moment. He loſt his ſpiritual life, he loſt all deſire for communion with God, he no longer retained any love for his benefactor. He dreaded his preſence, he ſought to hide himſelf from him, and when obliged to appear and anſwer, ſtood ſelf-condemned before him, till revived and reſtored by the promiſe of grace. And thus his poſterity derive from him what may be called a living death. They are dead while they live, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins* *, till they are again quickened by his holy Spirit. This is not a ſubject of common-place declamation; it is to be proved by the tenor of ſcripture, the nature of redemption, and the very reaſon of things. Unleſs we allow that man in his preſent ſtate is thus fallen, depraved, and dead, we muſt be reduced to the abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that God made him ſuch a creature as he now is: That when he formed him for himſelf, and endued him with a capacity and deſires which nothing ſhort of his own infinite goodneſs can ſatisfy, he ſhould at the ſame time create him with a diſpoſition to hate his Maker, to ſeek his ſatisfaction in ſenſuality upon a level with the brutes, and to confine his views and purſuits within the limits of this precarious life, while he feels, in defiance of himſelf, an inſtinctive thirſt for immortality. Man conſidered in this view would be a ſoleciſm in the creation; and they who do not acquieſce in the cauſe which the ſcripture aſſigns for the inconſiſtencies and contradictions which are found in his character, will never be able to aſſign any other cauſe, which will bear the trial of ſober and rational examination. What the poet ſays of Beelzebub, *Majeſtic though in ruins*, may be truly affirmed of man. His

* Eph. ii. 1.

His faculties and powers are proofs of his original greatneſs; his awful miſapplication of them equally prove that he is a fallen and ruined creature. He has loſt his true life, he is dead in ſin; and unleſs renewed and revived by the grace of God, can only, in a future ſtate, be fit for the company of the fallen angels.

3. *Death*, as the wages of ſin, extends ſtill farther. There is the *ſecond death*, the final and eternal miſery of ſoul and body in hell. This we know is the dreadful lot of the impenitent. We need no other proof that this was included in the ſentence; for certainly, the righteous Judge would not inflict a greater puniſhment than he had denounced. Indeed, it follows of courſe in the very nature of things, if we admit the ſoul to be immortal, a reſurrection both of the juſt and the unjuſt, and that there remains no other ſacrifice for ſin, in favour of thoſe who reject the goſpel. For to be diſowned of God in the great day, to be ſeparated from his favourable preſence, and conſcious of his endleſs diſpleaſure; to be abandoned to the unreſtrained rage of ſinful diſpoſitions and hopeleſs deſpair; to be inceſſantly tormented by the ſtings of a remorſeful conſcience, muſt be, upon the principles of ſcripture, the unavoidable conſequences of being cut off by death, in an unhumbled, unpardoned, unſanctified ſtate.

II. But, bleſſed be God, the goſpel reveals a relief and remedy fully adapted to the complicated miſery in which ſin has involved us. *As by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection from the dead.* MESSIAH has made an end of ſin, and deſtroyed the power of death. They who *believe in him, though they were dead, ſhall live* *. For he is the Reſurrection of the dead, and the Life of the living.

I. He raiſes the ſoul from the death of ſin unto a life of righteouſneſs. By his blood he procures a right

* John xi. 25.

right and liberty, and by his Spirit he communicates a power, that thoſe who were afar off, may draw nigh to God. Thus, even at preſent, believers are ſaid to be *riſen with him* *. Their ſpiritual life is renewed, and their happineſs is already commenced, though it be as yet ſubject to abatements.

1. Though when they are made partakers of his grace, and thereby delivered from the condemning power of the law, ſin has no longer dominion over them, as formerly; yet it ſtill wars and ſtrives within them, and their life is a ſtate of continual warfare. They now approve the law of God, *as holy, juſt, and good, and delight in it after the inward man* †; yet they are renewed but in part. They *feel a law in their members warring againſt the law of their minds. They cannot do the things that they would, nor as they would; for when they would do good, evil is preſent with them.* They are conſcious of a defect and a defilement attending their beſt ſervices. Their attainments are unſpeakably ſhort of the deſires which love to the Redeemer has raiſed in their hearts. They are aſhamed, and ſometimes almoſt diſcouraged. They adopt the Apoſtle's language, *Oh, wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* But with him they can likewiſe ſay, *I thank God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* They know he is on their ſide, and expect that he will at laſt *make them more than conquerors:* yet while the conflict laſts, they have much to ſuffer, and much to lament.

2. They are ſubject, like other people, to the various calamities and diſtreſſes incident to this ſtate of mortality; and they have, more or leſs, troubles peculiar to themſelves, ariſing from the nature of their profeſſion and conduct (if they are faithful to their Lord) while they live in a world that lieth in wickedneſs. But the curſe and ſting is taken out of their afflictions, and they are ſo moderated and ſanctified by

* Col. iii. 1. † Rom. vii. 12,—19.

by the wiſdom and grace of him whom they ſerve, that in the event they work for their good. But though they *yield the peaceful fruits of righteouſneſs* *, in themſelves, and at the time, they are not joyous, but grievous.

3. They are ſtill ſubject to the ſtroke of death, the ſeparation of ſoul and body. But this death has loſt its ſting as to them. And therefore they are ſaid not to die, but to ſleep in Jeſus. Death is not their enemy, but their friend. To them, inſtead of being an evil, it proves a deliverance from all evil, and an entrance into everlaſting life.

II. That new life to which they are raiſed, is ſurely connected with life eternal, the life of grace, with the life of glory. For Chriſt liveth in them, and being united to him by faith, they ſhall live while he liveth. They only ſhut their eyes upon the pains and ſorrows of this world, to open them immediately in his preſence, and ſo *they ſhall be for ever with the Lord.* How wonderful and happy is the tranſition! From diſeaſe and anguiſh, from weeping friends, and often from a ſtate of indigence and obſcurity, in which they have no friends to compaſſionate them, they remove to a ſtate of glory, honour, and immortality, to a manſion in the realms of light, to a ſeat near the throne of God. In the language of mortals, this ineffable honour and happineſs is ſhadowed out to us, by the emblems of a white robe, a golden harp, a palm-branch, (the token of victory), and a crown, not of oak or laurel, of gold or diamonds, *but a crown of life.* Such honour have all the ſaints. However afflicted or neglected, deſpiſed or oppreſſed, while upon earth, ſoon as their willing ſpirits take their flight from hence, they ſhine like the ſun in the kingdom of their Father. Thus Lazarus lay for a time, diſeaſed, neceſſitous, and ſlighted, at the rich man's

* Heb. xii. 11.

man's gate. Yet he was not without attendants. A guard of angels waited around him, and when he died conveyed his ſpirit into Abraham's boſom*. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham, the father of their nation, the father of the faithful. Our Lord therefore teaches us by this repreſentation, that the beggar Lazarus was not only happy after death, but highly exalted by him who ſeeth not as man ſeeth; for he was placed in Abraham's boſom, a ſituation which, according to the cuſtom of the Jews, was a mark of peculiar favour, intimacy, and diſtinction. Thus the beloved diſciple was ſeated in the boſom of our Lord, when he celebrated his laſt paſſover with his diſciples †.

3. Their dead bodies ſhall be raiſed at the great day, not in their former ſtate of weakneſs and corruption, but that which was *ſown in weakneſs ſhall be raiſed in power*, and the *mortal ſhall put on immortality*. *He ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned according to the likeneſs of his own glorious body*. So that his own reſurrection is both the pledge and the pattern of theirs. I have only farther to obſerve upon this ſubject at preſent, that as Adam is the root and head of all mankind, from whence they all derive a ſinful and mortal nature; ſo Jeſus, the ſecond Adam, is the root of a people who are united to him, planted and engrafted in him by faith. To theſe the reſurrection, conſidered as a bleſſing, is to be reſtrained. There will be a reſurrection of the wicked likewiſe ‡, but to condemnation, *ſhame, and everlaſting contempt* ‖. But the connection is cloſe and indiſſoluble between Chriſt the firſt-fruits, and them that are Chriſt's at his coming.

May we be happily prepared for this great event, *that when he ſhall appear we may have confidence in him, and not to be aſhamed before him* §. Happy they who ſhall

* Luke xvi. 22. † John xiii. 22,—25. ‡ John v. 29.
‖ Dan. xii. 2. § 1 John ii. 28.

ſhall then be able to welcome him in the language of the prophet, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will ſave us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his ſalvation* *. But how awful the contraſt of thoſe (many of them once the great, mighty, and honourable of the earth) who ſhall behold him with horror, and in the anguiſh of their ſouls ſhall call (in vain) *to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his preſence, ſaying, The great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand* †?

* Iſ. xxv. 9. † Rev. vi. 16, 17.

SER-

SERMON XLII.

The General Reſurrection.

1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

Behold, I ſhew you a myſtery. We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump, for the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed. For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality.

AN object in itſelf great, and which we know to be ſo, will appear ſmall to us if we view it from a diſtance. The ſtars, for example, in our view, are but as little ſpecks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is ſufficient to hide from us the whole body of the ſun. Diſtance of time has an effect upon us, in its kind, ſimilar to diſtance of ſpace. It diminiſhes in our mind the idea of what we are aſſured is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and importance. If any of us were informed that we ſhould certainly die before this day cloſes, what a ſudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts? That we all *muſt* die, is a truth, of which we are no leſs certain, than that we are now alive. But becauſe it is poſſible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for ſeveral years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the ſcripture as a divine revelation I need offer you no other

other proof, that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the preſent ſtate of things, and introduce a ſtate unchangeable and eternal. Then *the Lord will deſcend with a ſhout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The earth and all its works will be burnt up.* The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race muſt give an account of themſelves to God, and, according to his righteous award, be happy or miſerable in a degree beyond expreſſion or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly aſſured, that this tremendous ſcene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am ſpeaking, we ſhould be ſtartled with the ſigns of our Lord's coming in the air, what confuſion and alarm would overſpread the congregation? Yet, if the ſcripture be true, the hour is approaching, when we muſt all be ſpectators of this ſolemn event, and parties nearly intereſted in it. But becauſe it is at a diſtance, we can hear of it, ſpeak of it, and profeſs to expect it, with a coolneſs almoſt equal to indifference. May the Lord give us that faith which is the evidence of things not ſeen, that while I aim to lead your meditations to the ſubject of my text, we may be duly impreſſed by it: and that we may carry from hence ſuch a conſideration of our latter end, as may incline our hearts to that which is our true wiſdom!

Many curious enquiries and ſpeculations might be ſtarted from this paſſage, but which, becauſe I judge them to be *more curious* than *uſeful*, it is my intention to wave. I ſhall confine myſelf to what is plainly expreſſed, becauſe I wiſh rather to profit than to amuſe my hearers. The principal ſubject before us is the reſurrection of the dead, in the moſt pleaſing view of it; for my text ſpeaks only of thoſe

thoſe who ſhall change the mortal and corruptible, for incorruption and immortality.

I. The introduction, *Behold I ſhow you a myſtery.*

II. What we are taught to expect, *We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed.*

III. The ſuddenneſs of the event, *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*

IV. The grand preceding ſignal, *The trumpet ſhall ſound.*

I. The Apoſtle apprizes the Corinthians that he is about to *ſhow them a myſtery.* As the word *myſtery* has been treated with no ſmall contempt, I ſhall embrace this occaſion of offering you a ſhort explanation of it, as it is uſed in the ſcriptures. We are allowed to ſay, that there are myſteries in nature, and perhaps we may be allowed to ſpeak of myſteries in Providence; but though an Apoſtle aſſures us, that *great is the myſtery of godlineſs* *, many perſons will ſcarcely bear the application of the word to religion. And a late ingenious writer, who has many admirers in the preſent day, has ventured to affirm, in print, that where myſtery begins, religion ends. If the frequency of the caſe did not, in ſome degree, abate our wonder, *this* might ſeem almoſt a myſtery, that any perſons who profeſs to believe the ſcripture, ſhould ſo openly and flatly contradict what the ſcripture expreſsly and repeatedly declares: Or that while, as men of reaſon and philoſophy, they are forced to acknowledge a myſtery in every part of creation, and muſt confeſs it beyond their ability to explain the growth of a blade of graſs; they ſhould, in oppoſition to all the rules of analogy, conclude, that the goſpel, the moſt important concern of man, and which is commended to us as the moſt eminent diſplay of the wiſdom and power of God, is the only ſubject ſo level to our apprehenſions, as to be obvious, at firſt ſight, to

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

the moſt careleſs and ſuperficial obſervers. That great numbers of people are very far from being accurate and diligent in their religious enquiries, is too evident to be denied. How often do we meet with perſons of ſenſe who talk with propriety on philoſophical, political, or commercial ſubjects, and yet, when they ſpeak of religion, diſcover ſuch groſs ignorance, as would be ſhameful in a child of ten years old, and amounts to a full proof that they have not thought it worth their while to acquire even a ſlight knowledge of its firſt principles. Can we even conceive the poſſibility of a divine revelation that ſhould have nothing in it myſterious to perſons of this character?

A myſtery, according to the notation of the Greek word, ſignifies a ſecret. And all the peculiar truths of the goſpel may juſtly be ſtyled myſteries or ſecrets, for two reaſons.

1. Becauſe the diſcovery of them is beyond the reach of fallen man, and they neither would nor could have been known without a revelation from God. This is eminently true of the Reſurrection. The light of nature, which we often hear ſo highly commended, may afford ſome faint glimmerings of a future ſtate, but gives no intimation of a reſurrection. The men of wiſdom at Athens, the Stoic and Epicurean philoſophers, who differed widely in moſt parts of their reſpective ſchemes, united in deriding this ſentiment, and contemptuouſly ſtyled the Apoſtle Paul a babbler * for preaching it. But this ſecret is to us made known. And we are aſſured, not only that the Lord will receive to himſelf the departing ſpirits of his people, but that he will give commandment concerning their duſt, and, in due time, raiſe their vile bodies to a conformity with his own glorious body.

2. Becauſe,

* Acts xvii. 18.

2. Becauſe, though they are revealed expreſsly in the ſcripture, ſuch is the groſſneſs of our conceptions, and the ſtrength of our prejudices, that the truths of revelation are ſtill unintelligible to us, without a farther revelation of their true ſenſe to the mind, by the influence of his Holy Spirit. Otherwiſe, how can the ſecret of the Lord be reſtrained to thoſe who fear him*, when the book which contains it is open to all, and the literal and grammatical meaning of the words is in the poſſeſſion of many who fear him not?

Books in the arts and ſciences may be ſaid to be full of myſteries to thoſe who have not a ſuitable capacity and taſte for them; or who do not apply themſelves to ſtudy them with diligence, and patiently ſubmit to learn gradually one thing after another. If you put a treatiſe on the mathematics, or a ſyſtem of muſic, into the hands of a ploughman or labourer, you will not be ſurpriſed to find that he cannot underſtand a ſingle page. Shall the works of a Sir Iſaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable to one perſon, while another peruſes them with admiration and delight? Shall theſe require a certain turn of mind, and a cloſe attention? And can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that the Bible is the only book that requires no peculiar diſpoſition, or degree of application, to be underſtood, though it is deſigned to make us acquainted with the *deep things of God* †? In one reſpect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unleſs they are taught of God, yet all who are ſenſible of their own weakneſs may expect his teaching, if they humbly ſeek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being mathematicians. They have not a genius for the ſcience. But there is none teacheth like God. He

* Pſal. xxv. 14. † 1 Cor. ii. 10.

can give not only light, but ſight; not only leſſons, but the capacity neceſſary for their reception. And while his myſteries are hidden from the wiſe and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon him for inſtruction, he reveals them unto babes.

It may perhaps be thought, that a belief of the doctrine of the reſurrection does not require the ſame teaching of the Holy Spirit that is neceſſary to the right knowledge of ſome other doctrines of the goſpel. But ſuch a belief as may affect, cheer, and animate the heart, muſt be given us from above, for we cannot reaſon ourſelves into it. Nay, this divine teaching is neceſſary to ſecure the mind from the vain reaſonings, perplexities, and imaginations, which will bewilder our thoughts upon the ſubject, unleſs we learn to yield in ſimplicity of faith, to what the ſcripture has plainly revealed, and can be content to know no farther before the proper time.

II. What we are here taught to expect is thus expreſſed—*We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed.* We are not to ſuppoſe that the whole human race will die, and fail from the earth, before the reſurrection. Some will be living at the time, and among them ſome of the Lord's people. Of the living, it cannot properly be ſaid that they will be raiſed from the dead: but they will experience a change, which will put them exactly in the ſame ſtate with the others. Their mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up in life. Thus we conceive it to have been with Enoch and Elijah. They did not die like other men; but their mortal natures were frail and ſinful, like ours, and incapable of ſuſtaining the glories of heaven without a preparation. Fleſh and blood in its preſent ſtate cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption; but the dead ſhall ariſe, and the living ſhall be changed. Here is a wide field for ſpeculation, but I mean not to enter it. Curioſity would be glad to know how our bodies, when changed,

ged, ſhall ſtill be the ſame. Let us firſt determine how that body, which was once an infant, is the very ſame when it becomes a full grown man, or a man in extreme old age. Let us explain the tranſmutation of a caterpillar or ſilk-worm, which, from a reptile becomes a butterfly. What a wonderful change is this both in appearance and in powers? Who would ſuppoſe it to be the ſame creature? Yet who can deny it? It is ſafeſt and moſt comfortable for us, to refer to the wiſdom and power of God the accompliſhment of his own word.

III. Theſe great events will take place unexpectedly and ſuddenly. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* We have reaſon to believe, that a part at leaſt of mankind will be employed as they are now, and as they were in the days of Noah and Lot *, eating, drinking, buying, ſelling, building, and planting; having nothing leſs in their thoughts than the calamity and deſtruction which ſhall overwhelm them without warning. For while they are promiſing themſelves peace, the day of the Lord ſhall come upon them, like a thief in the night, unlooked for, and, like the pangs of a labouring woman, unavoidable. *In that day the lofty looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of man ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted* †. So large a part of divine prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, that I apprehend it is not probable that any of us ſhall be alive when this great and terrible day of the Lord ſhall be revealed. But are not ſome of us expoſed to a ſimilar dreadful ſurpriſe! If you die in your ſins, the conſequences will be no leſs deplorable to you, than if you ſaw the whole frame of nature periſhing with you. Alas, what will you do, whither will you flee for help, or where will you leave your glory, if, while you are engroſſed by the cares or pleaſures of this world, death ſhould arreſt you, and ſummon you to judgment?

* Luke xvii. 26,—30. † Iſ. ii. 6.

The rich man in the goſpel is not charged with any crimes of peculiar enormity. It is not ſaid that he ground the faces of the poor, or that he, by fraud or oppreſſion, kept back the hire of the labourers who had reaped his harveſt; he only rejoiced in his wealth, and in having much goods laid up for many years, and that therefore he might ſecurely eat, drink, and be merry. But God ſaid unto him, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee* *. Awful diſappointment! Thus will it be, ſooner or later, with all whoſe hearts and portions are in this world, but are not rich towards God! Conſider this, you that are like-minded with him. Tremble at the thought of being found in the number of thoſe who have all their conſolation here, and who, when they die, muſt leave their all behind them. Now is the acceptable time, the day of ſalvation. Now, if you will ſeek the Lord, he will be found of you. Now, if you pray for grace and faith, he will anſwer you. But *when once the Maſter of the houſe ſhall ariſe, and* with his own ſovereign authoritative hand ſhall *ſhut the door* of his mercy, it will then be in vain, and too late, to ſay, *Lord, Lord, open unto us* †!

IV. The great ſcene will be introduced by a ſignal. *At the laſt trump; for the trumpet ſhall ſound.* Thus the approach of a king or a judge is uſually announced; and the ſcripture frequently borrows images from our little affairs and cuſtoms, and, in condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, illuſtrates things in themſelves too great for our conceptions, by comparing them with thoſe which are more familiar to us.

It will indeed be comparing great things with ſmall, if I attempt to illuſtrate this ſublime idea by local cuſtoms which obtain in this kingdom. At a time of aſſize, when the judges, to whom the adminiſtration and guardianſhip of our laws are entruſted, are making their entrance, expectation is awake,

* Luke xii. 20. † Luke xiii. 25.

awake, and a kind of reverence and awe is felt, even by thoſe who are not immediately concerned in their inqueſt. The dignity of their office, the purpoſe for which they come, the concourſe of people, the order of the proceſſion, and the ſound of the trumpet, all concur in raiſing an emotion in the hearts of the ſpectators. Happy are they then upon whom the inflexible law has no demand! But who can deſcribe the terror with which the ſound of the trumpet is heard by the unhappy criminal; and the throbbings of *his* heart, if he be already convicted in his own conſcience, and knows or fears that there is ſufficient evidence at hand to fix the fact upon him, and to prove his guilt? For ſoon the judge will take his ſeat, the books will be opened, the cauſe tried, and the criminal ſentenced. Many circumſtances of this kind are alluded to in the ſcripture, to aſſiſt us in forming ſome conception of what will take place, when all the race of Adam, ſmall and great, ſhall ſtand before the Sovereign Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy. But the concourſe, the ſolemnity, the ſcrutiny, the event, in the moſt weighty cauſes that can come before a human judicature, are mere ſhadows, and trivial as the ſports of children, if compared with the buſineſs of this tremendous tribunal. *The Lord himſelf will deſcend with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God.* What a trumpet will that be, whoſe ſound ſhall diſſolve the frame of nature, and awaken the dead? When the Lord is ſeated upon his great *white throne* *, the heavens and the earth ſhall flee from his preſence; but the whole race of mankind ſhall be aſſembled before him, each one to give an account of himſelf, to him, from whoſe penetrating knowledge no ſecret can be hidden, and from whoſe unerring inflexible ſentence there can be no appeal. *Where then ſhall the wicked and the ungodly appear?*—

* Rev. xx. 11.

But it will be a joyful day to believers: they ſhall be ſeparated as the wheat from the tares, and arranged at his right hand. When the Lord ſhall come, attended by his holy angels, his redeemed people will reaſſume their bodies, refined and freed from all that was corruptible; and thoſe of them who ſhall be then living will be changed, and caught up to meet him in the air. He will then own them, approve and crown them, before aſſembled worlds. Every charge that can be brought againſt them will be over-ruled, and their plea, that they truſted in him for ſalvation, be admitted and ratified. They will be accepted and juſtified. They will ſhine like the ſun in his train, and attend, as aſſeſſors with him, when he ſhall paſs final judgment upon his and their enemies. Then he will be admired in and by them that believe. Their tears will be for ever wiped away, when he ſhall ſay to them, *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* *.

Beloved, if theſe things are ſo, *what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs* †? Should we not *give all diligence to make our calling and election ſure*, that we may be found of him in peace? He who will then be ſeated upon the throne of judgment, is to us made known as ſeated upon a throne of grace. It is time, it is high time, and bleſſed be God it is not yet too late, to ſeek his mercy. Still the goſpel invites us to hear his voice, and to humble ourſelves before him. Once more you are invited, ſome of you perhaps for the laſt time; how know you but ſickneſs or death may be at the very door? Conſider, Are you prepared? Examine the foundation of your hope,—and do it quickly, impartially, and earneſtly, leſt you ſhould be cut off in an hour when you are not aware, and periſh with a lie in your right hand.

SER-

* Matt. xxv. 34. † 2 Pet. iii. 11.

SERMON XLIII.

Death ſwallowed up in Victory.

1 COR. xv. 54.

Then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is ſwallowed up in victory!

DEATH, ſimply conſidered, is no more than a privative idea, ſignifying a ceſſation of life; or, that what was once living lives no longer. But it has been the general, perhaps the univerſal cuſtom of mankind to perſonify it. Imagination gives death a formidable appearance, arms it with a dart, ſting, or ſcythe, and repreſents it as an active, inexorable, and invincible reality. In this view Death is a great devourer; with his iron tongue he calls for thouſands at a meal. He has already ſwallowed up all the preceding generations of men; all who are now living are marked as his inevitable prey; he is ſtill unſatisfied, and will go on devouring till the Lord ſhall come. Then this deſtroyer ſhall be deſtroyed; he ſhall ſwallow no more, but be ſwallowed up himſelf in victory. Thus the ſcripture accommodates itſelf to the language and apprehenſions of mortals. Farther, the metaphorical uſage of the word *ſwallow* ſtill enlarges and aggrandizes the idea. Thus the earth is ſaid to *have opened her mouth and ſwallowed up Korah* and his accomplices *. And thus a pebble, a millſtone, or a mountain, if caſt into the ocean, would be ſwallowed up, irrecoverably loſt and gone, as though they had never been †. Such ſhall be the triumphant victory of MESSIAH in the great day of the conſummation

* Numb. xvi. 32. † Rev. xviii. 21.

mation of all things. Death, in its cauſe and in its effects, ſhall be utterly deſtroyed. Man was created upright, and lived in a paradiſe, till, by ſin, he brought death into the world. From that time death has reigned by ſin, and evils abound. But MESSIAH came to make an end of ſin, to deſtroy death, and him that hath the power of it, to repair every diſorder, and to remove every miſery; and he will ſo fully, ſo glorioufly accompliſh his great undertaking in the final iſſue, that every thing contrary to holineſs and happineſs ſhall be ſwallowed up and buried beyond the poſſibility of a return, as a ſtone that is ſunk in the depths of the ſea. Thus *where ſin has abounded grace will much more abound.*

This victory, however, being the Redeemer's work and the fruit of his mediation, the ſcripture teaches us to reſtrain the benefits of it to the ſubjects of his church and kingdom. *In Adam all die.* A depraved nature, guilt, ſorrow, and death, extend to all his poſterity. The *All, who in Chriſt ſhall be made alive,* are thoſe who, by faith in him, are delivered from the ſting of death, which is ſin, and are made partakers of a new nature. There is a *ſecond death,* which, though it ſhall not hurt the believers in Jeſus *, will finally ſwallow up the impenitent and ungodly. We live in an age when there is, if I may ſo ſpeak, a reſurrection of many old and exploded errors, which, though they have been often refuted and forgotten, are admired and embraced by ſome perſons as new and wonderful diſcoveries. Of this ſtamp, is the conceit of a univerſal reſtitution to a ſtate of happineſs of all intelligent creatures, whether angels or men, who have rebelled againſt the will and government of God. This ſentiment contradicts the current doctrine of ſcripture, which aſſerts the everlaſting miſery of the finally impenitent, in as ſtrong terms, in the very ſame terms, as the eternal happineſs

* Rev. ii. 11.

happineſs of the righteous, and ſometimes in the very ſame verſe *. Nor can it poſſibly be true, if our Lord ſpake the truth concerning Judas, when he ſaid, *It had been good for that man if he had never been born* †. If I could conſider this notion as *harmleſs* though *uſeleſs*, and no worſe than many miſtakes which men of upright minds have made, through inattention and weakneſs of judgment, I ſhould not have mentioned it. But I judge it to be little leſs pernicious and poiſonous, than falſe. It directly tends to abate that ſenſe of the evil of ſin, of the inflexible juſtice of God, and the truth of his threatenings, which is but too weak in the beſt of men. Let us abide by the plain declarations of his word, which aſſures us, *that there remaineth no other ſacrifice for ſin* ‡, no future relief againſt it, for thoſe who now refuſe the goſpel; and that they who cordially receive it ſhall be ſaved with an everlaſting ſalvation, and ſhall one day ſing, *Death is ſwallowed up in victory.*

I would farther obſerve, that many prophecies have a gradual and increaſing accompliſhment, and may be applied to ſeveral periods; though their full completion will only be at the reſurrection and laſt judgment. This paſſage, as it ſtands in the prophecy of Iſaiah ‖, from whence the apoſtle quotes it, appears to have a reference to the comparatively brighter light and glory of the goſpel-ſtate beyond what was enjoyed by the church under the Levitical diſpenſation; and eſpecially to the privileges of thoſe happy days, *when the fulneſs of the Gentiles, and the remnant of Iſrael ſhall be brought in, and the kingdoms of the world ſhall become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Chriſt.* I would not exclude theſe ſubordinate ſenſes; I have already conſidered them. But my text calls our attention to the end of all things. Then,

* Matt. xx. 46. † Matt. xxvi. 24. ‡ Heb. x. 26, 27.
‖ Iſ. xxv. 8.

in the moſt emphatical ſenſe, *Death will be ſwallowed up of victory.*

Let us endeavour to realize the great ſcene before us, to contemplate the redeemed of the Lord when they ſhall return with him to animate their glorified bodies. Let us aſk the queſtion which the elder propoſed to John, *Who are theſe clothed with white robes, and whence came they*? They came out of great tribulation*, they were once under the power of death, but now death, as to them, is ſwallowed up in victory. In every ſenſe in which death ruled over them they are now completely delivered.

I. They were once *dead in law.* They had revolted from their Maker. They had violated the holy order of his government, and ſtood expoſed to his righteous diſpleaſure, and to the heavy penalty annexed to the tranſgreſſion of his commandments. But mercy interpoſed. *God ſo loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son* to make an atonement for their ſins, and to be their *wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption* †. They received grace to believe in this Saviour, and now they are delivered from condemnation. They are *accepted in the Beloved.* They are conſidered as one with him, and intereſted in all that he did, and in all that he ſuffered. Now they are the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. *Though they were afar off, they are brought nigh*, admitted into a nearer relation than the holy angels to him who ſitteth upon the throne. For he took upon him, and ſtill is pleaſed to wear, not the nature of angels, but the human nature. Their former guilt is cancelled, blotted out, and ſwallowed up. All their ſins are covered, ſunk in his precious blood as in a deep ſea, ſo that even if ſought for, they can no more be found. That they have ſinned will always be a truth; and probably they will never loſe a conſciouſneſs of what they were by nature and practice

* Rev. vii. 13. † 1 Cor. i. 30.

practice while in this world. But this, ſo far from abating their joy, will heighten their gratitude and praiſe *to him who loved them, and waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood* *. Their happineſs principally conſiſts in a perception of his love to them, and in their returns of grateful love to him. *And they love him much*, becauſe, for his ſake, *much has been forgiven them* †.

II. Once they were *dead in ſin*. They were deſtitute of the knowledge and love of God. *They were fooliſh, deceived, and diſobedient, enſlaved to divers luſts* ‡, to inordinate, ſenſual, unſatisfying *pleaſures. They lived in malice and envy, they were hateful, and they hated one another.* In a word, *they were dead while they lived* ‖. But by the power of grace they were awakened and raiſed from this death, and made partakers of a new, a ſpiritual, and divine life. Yet the principle of ſin and death ſtill remained in them; and their life upon earth, though a life of faith in the Son of God, was a ſtate of continual warfare. They had many a conflict, and were often greatly diſtreſſed. *They ſowed in tears*, to the end of their pilgrimage, *but now they reap in joy* §. This *death is alſo ſwallowed up in victory.* They are now entirely and for ever freed from every clog, defect, and defilement. By beholding their Lord as he is, in all his glory and love, without any interpoſing veil or cloud, they are made like him, and to the utmoſt meaſure of their capacity conformed to his image. Now they are abſolutely ſpotleſs and impeccable; for though mutability ſeems no leſs eſſential to a creature than dependence, yet *they* cannot change, becauſe their Lord is unchangeable, for *their life is hidden with Chriſt in God* **. They cannot fall from their holineſs or happineſs, becauſe he has engaged to uphold and maintain them by his almighty power.

III. One

* Rev. i. 5. † Luke vii. 47. ‡ Titus iii. 3.
‖ 1 Tim. v. 6. § Pſal. cxxvi. 5. ** Col. iii. 3.

III. One branch of the death due to sin is the *tyranny and power of Satan.* For a time he ruled in their hearts, as in his own strong hold; and while they were blinded by his influence they were little affected with their bondage. Hard as his service was, they did not often complain of it. They were led by him according to his will for the most part without resistance, or, if they attempted to resist, they found it was in vain. But in his own hour their Lord, who had bought them, dispossessed their strong enemy, and claimed their hearts for himself. Yet after they were thus set free from his ruling power, this adversary was always plotting and fighting against them. How much have some of them suffered from his subtle wiles and his fiery darts! from his rage as a roaring lion, from his cunning as a serpent lying in their path, and from his attempts to deceive them under the semblance of an angel of light *! But now they are placed out of his reach. Death and Satan are swallowed up. The victory is complete. The wicked one shall never have access to touch or disturb them any more. Now he is shut up in his own place, and the door sealed, no more to open. While he was permitted to vex and worry them, he acted under a limited commission which he could not exceed; all was directed and over-ruled by the wisdom and love of their Lord for their advantage. Such exercises were necessary, then, to discover to them more of the weakness and vileness of their own hearts, to make them more sensible of their dependence upon their Saviour, and to afford them affecting proofs of his power and care engaged in their behalf. But they are necessary no longer. Their warfare is finished. They are now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest †.

IV. While they were in the world, they had a share, many of them a very large share, of the

troubles

* 2 Cor. xi. 14. † Job iii. 17.

woes and ſufferings incident to this mortal ſtate: which, as they are the fruits and effects of ſin, and greatly contribute to ſhorten the life of man, and haſten his return to duſt, are, as I formerly obſerved, properly included in the comprehenſive meaning of the original ſentence, *Death*. They belong to its train, and are harbingers of its approach. None of the race of Adam are exempted from theſe; but eſpecially the ſervants of God have no exemption. Their gracious Lord, who frees them from condemnation, and gives them peace in himſelf, aſſures them that in this world they ſhall have tribulation *. This is ſo inſeparable from their calling, that it is mentioned as one ſpecial mark of their adoption and ſonſhip †. If the proſperity of the wicked ſometimes continues for a ſeaſon without interruption, *their day is coming* ‡; but the righteous may expect chaſtiſement and diſcipline daily. Thus their graces are refined, ſtrengthened, and diſplayed, to the praiſe of their heavenly Father. There is no promiſe in the Bible that ſecures the moſt eminent and exemplary believer from participating in the heavieſt calamities in common with others, and they have many trials peculiar to themſelves. Thus, while upon earth, they endure hardſhip for his ſake. Becauſe he choſe them out of the world, and they would no longer comply with its ſinful maxims and cuſtoms, *the world hated them* ||. Many of them were the mark of public ſcorn and malice, accounted the offſcouring of all things; they were driven to deſerts, and mountains, and caves; they ſuffered ſtripes, impriſonment, and death. Others had trials of pains, ſickneſs, and poverty, of ſharp bereaving diſpenſations. Their gourds withered, and the deſire of their eyes was taken away with a ſtroke. They had fightings without, and fears within. So that if their preſſures and troubles were conſidered, without taking into the account their inward

* John xvi. 33. † Heb. xii. 6,—8. ‡ Pſ. xxxvii. 13. || John xv. 19.

ward ſupports, and the conſolation they derived from their hopes beyond the grave, they might be deemed *of all men the moſt miſerable* *. But they were ſupported under theſe exerciſes, brought ſafely through them, and now their ſorrows are ſwallowed up in victory. *Now the days of their mourning are ended* †. They now confeſs, that their longeſt afflictions were momentary, and their heavieſt burdens were light, in compariſon of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ‡ which they have entered upon. Sorrow and ſighing have taken their everlaſting flight, and joy and gladneſs have come forth to meet them, and to dwell with them for ever ‖.

V. In their collective capacity, *the ſeeds of ſin* often produced *bitter fruits*. Through remaining ignorance and prejudice, they often miſtook and miſunderſtood one another. They loſt much good which they might otherwiſe have enjoyed, and brought upon themſelves many evils, through their intemperate heats and unſanctified zeal, which divided them into little parties and ſeparate intereſts. The children of the ſame family, the members of the ſame body, were too often at variance, or at leaſt cold and diſtant in their regards to each other. Yea, Satan could foment diſcord and jealouſies among thoſe who lived in the ſame houſe, or met at the ſame table of the Lord. But now grace has triumphed over every evil; ſin and death are ſwallowed up in victory. Now all is harmony, love, and joy. They have one heart and one ſong, which will never more be blemiſhed by the harſhneſs of a ſingle diſcordant note.

May this proſpect animate our hopes, and awaken, in thoſe who have hitherto been afar off, a deſire of ſharing in the happineſs of the redeemed! Awful will be the contraſt to thoſe who have had their portion in this world! Is it needful to addreſs any in

* 1 Cor. xv. 19.
† Iſ. lx. 17.
‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.
‖ Iſ. li. 11.

in this auditory, in the language which our Lord uſed to *his* impenitent hearers? *Wo unto you that are rich; for you have received your conſolation: Wo unto you that are full; for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now; for ye ſhall mourn and weep* *! When the rich man, who had lived in honour and affluence here, was torn from all that he loved, and lifted up his eyes in torment; the remembrance of his former ſtate, that he once had *his* good things †, but that they were gone, for ever gone, could only be a keen aggravation of his miſery. Dreadful will be the condition of all who die in their ſins; but the caſe of thoſe who are now frequently envied by the ignorant, in the view of a mind enlightened by the truth, muſt appear doubly and peculiarly pitiable. They have the moſt to loſe, they have the moſt to account for. Alas, how terrible, how ſudden the change! From a ſtate of honour and influence amongſt men, to fall in a moment under the contempt and diſpleaſure of the holy God—to paſs, from a crowd of dependents and flatterers, to the company of Satan and his angels; from grandeur and opulence, to a ſtate of utter darkneſs and horror, where the worm dieth not, and the fire cannot be quenched ‡. Theſe are ſenſible images, it is true; the things of the unſeen world cannot be deſcribed to us as they are in themſelves; but we may be certain that the deſcription falls unſpeakably ſhort of the reality. The malicious inſults of the powers of darkneſs, the mutual recriminations of thoſe who, having been connected in ſin here, will be ſome way connected in miſery hereafter ‖—remorſe, rage, deſpair, a total and final excluſion from God the fountain of happineſs, with an abiding ſenſe of his indignation:—this complicated miſery cannot be expreſſed in the language of mortals—like the joy of the bleſſed,

* Luke vi. 24, 25.
† Luke xvi. 25.
‡ Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.
‖ Matt. xiii. 30.

bleſſed, it is more than eye hath ſeen, or ear hath heard, or can poſſibly enter into the heart of man to conceive *. Add the ideas of *unchangeable* and *eternal* to the reſt, that it will be a miſery admitting of no intermiſſion, abatement, or end; and then ſeriouſly conſider, what can it profit a man ſhould he gain the whole world, if at laſt he ſhould thus loſe his ſoul †? No longer make a mock at ſin; it is not a ſmall evil; it is a great evil in itſelf, and, unleſs pardoned and forſaken, will be productive of tremendous conſequences. No longer make light of the goſpel; it points out to you the only poſſible method of eſcaping the damnation of hell. To refuſe it, is to ruſh upon remedileſs deſtruction. No longer truſt in uncertain riches; if you poſſeſs them, I need not tell you they do not make you happy at preſent, much leſs will they comfort you in the hour of death, or profit you in the day of wrath ‡. Waſte not your time and talents (which muſt be accounted for) in the purſuit of ſenſual pleaſure; in the end it will bite like a ſerpent. For all theſe things God will aſſuredly bring you into judgment, unleſs in this day of grace you humble yourſelves to implore that mercy which is ſtill propoſed to you, if you will ſeek it ſincerely and with your whole heart; and which I once more intreat, charge, and adjure you to ſeek, by the great name of MESSIAH, the Saviour, by his agonies and bloody ſweat, by his croſs and paſſion, by his precious death, and by the conſideration of his future glorious appearance, to ſubdue all things to himſelf.

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. † Matt. xvi. 26. ‡ Prov. xi. 4.

SER-

SERMON XLIV.

Triumph over Death and the Grave.

1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin; and the ſtrength of ſin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

THE Chriſtian ſoldier may, with the greateſt propriety, be ſaid *to war a good warfare**. He is engaged in a good cauſe; he fights under the eye of the Captain of his ſalvation. Though he be weak in himſelf, and though his enemies are many and mighty, he may do that which in other ſoldiers would be preſumption, and has often been the cauſe of a defeat; he may triumph while he is in the heat of battle, and aſſure himſelf of victory before the conflict is actually decided; for the Lord, his great Commander, fights for him, goes before him, and treads his enemies under his feet. Such a perſuaſion, when ſolidly grounded upon the promiſes and engagement of a faithful unchangeable God, is ſufficient, it ſhould ſeem, to make a coward bold. True Chriſtians are not cowards; yet, when they compare themſelves with their adverſaries, they ſee much reaſon for fear and ſuſpicion on their own parts; but when they look to their Saviour, they are enlightened, ſtrengthened, and comforted. They conſider who he is, what he has done; that the battle is not ſo much theirs as his; that he is their ſtrength and their ſhield, and that his honour is concerned in the event of

* 1 Tim. i. 18.

of the war. Thus out of weakneſs they are made ſtrong; and however preſſed and oppoſed, they can ſay, *Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us* *! The whole power of the oppoſition againſt them is ſummed up in the words *ſin* and *death:* but theſe enemies are already weakened and diſarmed. It is ſin that furniſhed death with his ſting; a ſting ſharpened and ſtrengthened by the law. But Jeſus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of ſin, and has ſo fulfilled and ſatisfied the law on their behalf, that death is deprived of its ſting, and can no longer hurt them. They may therefore meet it with confidence, and ſay, *Bleſſed be God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

We have here two unſpeakably different views to take of the ſame ſubject. *Death armed with its formidable ſting;* and *death* rendered harmleſs, and its aſpect ſoftened, by the *removal of the ſting.*

I. The firſt is a very awful ſubject. I intreat your attention. I am not now about to ſpeak upon a point of ſpeculation. It is a perſonal, a home concern to us all. For we muſt all die. But ſhould any of you feel, not only the ſtroke, but the ſting of death when you leave this world, it were better for you that you had never been born.

The love of life, and conſequently a reluctance to that diſſolution of the intimate union between ſoul and body, which we call death, ſeems natural to man. But, if there was no hereafter, no ſtate of judgment and retribution to be expected; if there was no conſciouſneſs of guilt, no foreboding of conſequences upon the mind; if we only conſidered death as inevitable, and had no apprehenſions beyond it; death would be diveſted of its principal terrors. We ſee that when conſcience is ſtupified, or when the mind is poiſoned with infidelity, many people,

* Rom. viii 37.

ple, notwithſtanding the natural love of life, are ſo diſguſted with its diſappointments, that a fit of impatience, or the dread of contempt, often prevail on them to ruſh upon death by an act of their own will; or to hazard it in a duel, rather than be ſuſpected of wanting what they account ſpirit. But death has a ſting, though they perceive it not till they feel it, till they are ſtung by it paſt recovery.

But uſually, and where the heart is not quite hardened, men are unwilling and afraid to die. They have ſome apprehenſion of the ſting. Death can ſting at a diſtance. How often and how greatly does the fear of death poiſon and embitter all the comforts of life, even in the time of health! Perhaps ſome of you well know this to be true. But in health people can in ſome meaſure run away from themſelves, if I may ſo ſpeak. They fly to buſineſs, company, and amuſements, to hide themſelves from their own reflections. Their fears are tranſient, occaſional, and partial; they would tremble indeed, if they knew all; or if they were ſtedfaſtly and deliberately to contemplate what they do know. How ſin is the ſting of death, is beſt diſcovered when conſcience is alarmed in a time of ſickneſs; when the things of the world can no longer amuſe, and death is approaching with haſty ſtrides. Theſe ſcenes are moſtly kept ſecret; and very often they are not underſtood by thoſe who are ſpectators of them. Perhaps the unhappy terrified ſinner is conſidered as delirious, becauſe the ſting of death in his conſcience extorts from him ſuch confeſſions and complaints as he never made before. What was once ſlighted as a fable, is now ſeen and felt as a reality. Such caſes, I am afraid, are more frequent than we are in general aware of. But they are ſuppreſſed, aſcribed to the violence of the fever, and forgotten as ſoon as poſſible. Yet they do ſometimes tranſpire. I believe there is no reaſon to doubt the truth

truth of what we have heard, of one, who in the horrors of deſpair vainly offered his phyſicians many thouſand pounds, to prolong his life but a ſingle day. The relation is in print, of another, who, pointing to the fire in his chamber, ſaid, If he were only to lie twenty thouſand years in ſuch a fire, he ſhould eſteem it a mercy compared with what he felt, and with what he ſaw awaiting him. It is not always thus. Many perſons die inſenſible as they lived, and can perhaps, trifle and jeſt in their laſt moments. But the ſcripture aſſures us, that when they who die in their ſins breathe their laſt in this world, they open their eyes in the other world in torments. For the ſting of death, the deſert of ſin, unleſs timely removed by faith in Jeſus, will fill the ſoul with anguiſh for ever. It derives a ſtrength, an efficacy, and a continuance from the law.

This law, which gives ſtrength to ſin and ſharpens the ſting of death, is the law of our creation, as connected with the penalty which God has annexed to the breach of it. Our relation to God, as we are his creatures, requires us, according to the very nature of things, ſupremely to love, ſerve, truſt, and obey him, who made us, and *in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being* *. And our revolting from him, and living to ourſelves in oppoſition to his will, is ſuch an affront to his wiſdom, power, authority, and goodneſs, as muſt neceſſarily involve miſery in the very idea of it, if his perfections, the capacity of our ſouls, and our abſolute dependence upon him, be attended to. And they muſt be attended to ſooner or later. Though he keep long ſilence, and the ſinner preſumes upon his patience, and *thinks him ſuch a one as himſelf*, he will at length *reprove him* †, and ſet his ſins in order before him, in contraſt with the demands of his law. The nature, authority, extent, and

* Acts xvii. 28. † Pſ. l. 21.

and ſanction of this law, all combine to give efficacy to the ſting of death.

1. The law, to which our tempers and conduct ought to be conformed, is not an *arbitrary appointment*; but neceſſarily reſults from our ſtate as creatures, and the capacities and powers we have received from our Creator. It is therefore holy, wiſe, and good; indiſpenſable, and unchangeable. To love God with all our heart and ſtrength, to depend upon him, to conform to every intimation of his will, was the duty of man from the firſt moment of his exiſtence; was the law of his nature, written originally in his heart. The republication of it, as it ſtands in the Bible, by precepts and prohibitions, would not have been neceſſary had he continued in that ſtate of rectitude in which he was created. It became neceſſary after his fall, to reſtrain him from evil and to convince him of ſin; but could not properly increaſe his primitive obligation to obedience.

2. We are bound to the obſervance of this law by the higheſt *authority*. It is the law of God, our Maker, Preſerver, and Benefactor, who has every conceivable right to govern us. His eye is always upon us, and we are ſurrounded by his power, ſo that we can neither avoid his notice nor eſcape his hand. *Men* are uſually tenacious of their authority; they ſeldom allow their dependants to diſpute or diſobey their commands with impunity. It is expected that a ſon ſhould honour his father, and a ſervant his maſter*. And when men have power to execute the dictates of their pride, they frequently puniſh diſobedience with death. But how will theſe haughty worms, who trample upon their fellow-worms, and think they have a right to the moſt implicit obedience from their inferiors; how will they tremble when they ſhall appear before God, who is no reſpecter of perſons,

* Mal. i. 6.

perſons, to anſwer for their contempt of the authority of the Sovereign Lawgiver, who, alone, is able to ſave or to deſtroy? That *we ought to obey God rather than man* *, will, perhaps, be allowed as a ſpeculative truth; but whoever will uniformly make it the rule of his practice, muſt expect upon many occaſions to be deemed a fool or a madman by the world around him. But ſovereignty, majeſty, authority, and power, belong to God. He is the Governor of the univerſe, and his throne is eſtabliſhed in righteouſneſs. He is long-ſuffering, and waits to be gracious, but he will not forego his right. Sin is the ſting of death indeed, when the authority of him againſt whom it was committed is perceived by the conſcience.

3. The *extent* of the law adds to the ſtrength by which ſin acts as the ſting of death. Human laws can only take cogniſance of words and actions. But the law of God reaches to the thoughts and inward receſſes of the heart. It condemns what is moſt ſpecious and moſt approved amongſt men, if not proceeding from a right intention, and directed to the right end, which can be no other than the will and glory of him who made us. It condemns the ſinner not only for the evil which he has actually committed, but for every ſinful purpoſe formed in his heart, and which was only rendered abortive for want of opportunity †. It likewiſe takes exact notice of every aggravation of ſin, ariſing from circumſtances, from the abuſe of ſuperior light and advantages, and from the long train of conſequences, increaſing in proportion to the influence which the rank, wealth, or extenſive connections of the offender give to his example.

4. The *ſanction* of the law, which thus ſtrengthens the malignity of ſin, is the very *point*, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, of the *ſting* of death. This is the diſpleaſure

* Acts v. 29. † Matt. v 28.

diſpleaſure of the Almighty. His holy, inflexible love of order will exclude thoſe who violate it from his favour. They muſt be miſerable, unleſs they are reconciled and renewed by the grace of the goſpel. They muſt be ſeparated from him, and they cannot be happy without him. They are not ſo even in this world, which they love. How miſerable then muſt they be, when, torn from all their attachments, pleaſures, and poſſeſſions, having no longer any thing to divert them from a fixed attention to their true ſtate, they ſhall be made keenly ſenſible of what is implied in that ſentence, *Depart from me, ye accurſed, into devouring fire.* We cannot now conceive what it will be to loſe the only good which can ſatisfy a ſoul: To be ſhut out from God, whoſe favour is life, and in whoſe preſence there is fulneſs of joy, and to be ſhut up where neither peace nor hope can enter. The images of fire unquenchable, and a never-dying worm, are but faint emblems of that deſpair and remorſe which will ſting the ſinful ſoul in a future ſtate. This is the ſecond death: this is eternal death; for the wicked, and all they who forget God, when thruſt into hell, will for ever deſire to die, and death will for ever flee from them *.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to a more pleaſing them, and attempt to take a view of death as ſoftened into a privilege by him who has brought life and immortality to light. *Jeſus died.* His death was penal; he died for ſin, though not for his own, and therefore ſuffered the penalty due to ſin, the curſe of the broken law. The torment and ſhame of his crucifixion were preceded and accompanied by unknown agonies and conflicts, which cauſed him to ſweat blood, and to utter ſtrong cries and groans. Death ſtung him to the heart; but (as it is ſaid of the enraged bee) he loſt his ſting. The law having been honoured, and ſin expiated, by the obedience

* Rev. ix. 6.

and ſufferings of the Son of God for us, and in our nature, death has no longer power to ſting thoſe who believe in him. They do not properly *die*, they *fall aſleep* * in Jeſus. To them this laſt enemy acts a friendly part. He is ſent to put an end to all their ſorrows, and to introduce them into a ſtate of endleſs life and joy.

1. Dying believers can ſing this ſong before their departure out of the world. We expect it, when we are called to attend them in their laſt hours; and if their illneſs leaves them in poſſeſſion of their faculties and ſpeech, we are ſeldom diſappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this ſubject cannot be collected from what we obſerve of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We muſt be in ſimilar circumſtances ourſelves, before we can ſee *as they ſee*, or poſſeſs the ideas which they endeavour to deſcribe, and which ſeem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable teſtimony, that many faithful ſervants of God, when called to ſuffer for his ſake, have not only been ſupported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the ſevereſt tortures, and even in the midſt of the flames. We ſuppoſe, I think with reaſon, that ſuch communications of light and power as raiſe a perſon, in ſuch ſituations, above the ordinary feelings of humanity, muſt, either in kind or degree, be ſuperior to what is uſually enjoyed by Chriſtians in the ſmoother walks of proſperity and outward peace. God, who is all-ſufficient, and always near, has promiſed to give his people ſtrength according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not diſappointed. A meaſure of the like extraordinary diſcoveries and ſupports is often vouchſafed to dying believers, and thus the gloom, which might otherwiſe hang over their dying hours, is diſpelled; and while they contemplate the approach

* Acts vii. 60. 1 Theſſ. iv. 15.

approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they ſtand upon the threſhold of heaven. It ſeems, in many caſes, as if the weakneſs of the bodily frame gave occaſion to the awakening of ſome faculty, till then dormant, in the ſoul, by which inviſibles are not only believed, but ſeen, and unutterables are heard and underſtood.

The ſoul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light through chinks.——

Inſtances are frequent of thoſe who are thus bleſſed when they die in the Lord; and it does not appear that old age, or great knowledge, or long experience, give any conſiderable advantage in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for ſin, and the hope ſolidly fixed upon the Saviour, perſons of weak capacities and ſmall attainments, yea, novices and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often the preſent comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inſpire them with a dignity of ſentiment and expreſſion far beyond what could be expected from them; and perhaps their deportment upon the whole is no leſs animating and encouraging, than that of the moſt eſtabliſhed and beſt informed believers. Thus, *out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings* the Lord *ordains ſtrength, and perfects his praiſe* *. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more of the certainty and importance of divine things than can be derived from the ordinary methods of inſtruction in the courſe of many years. In the midſt of agonies and outward diſtreſs, we hear them with admiration declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleaſure in their happieſt days of health equal to what they enjoy when fleſh and heart are fainting. For death has loſt its ſting as to them, and while they

* Pſ. viii. 2.

are able to ſpeak, they continue aſcribing praiſe to him, *who has given them the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Every word in this doxology is emphatical.

1*ſt*, *Thanks be to God.* This bleſſedneſs is all his work. The means are of his gracious appointment. The application is by his gracious power. He gave his Son for them, he ſent his goſpel to them. It was the agency of his Spirit that made them a willing people. The word of promiſe, which is the ground of their hope, was of his gratuitous providing, and it was he who conſtrained and enabled them to truſt in it *.

2*d*, *Who giveth us the victory.* This is victory indeed; for it is over the laſt enemy; and after the laſt enemy is vanquiſhed, there can be no more conflicts. In this ſenſe, believers are more than conquerors. In other wars, they who have conquered once and again, may have been finally defeated, or they may have died (like our long-lamented General Wolfe) upon the field of battle, and have left the fruits of their victory to be enjoyed by others. But the Chriſtian ſoldier, though he may occaſionally be a loſer in a ſkirmiſh, is ſure to conquer in the laſt great deciding battle; and when, to an eye of ſenſe, he ſeems to fall, he is inſtantly tranſlated to receive the plaudit of his Commander, and the crown of life which he has prepared for them that love him.

3*d*, This victory is *through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* They *gained it not by their own ſword, neither was it their own arm that ſaved them* †. He died to deliver them, who would otherwiſe, through fear of death, have been always ſubject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly ſay, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory and the*

* Pſ. cxix. 49. † Pſ. xliv. 3.

the praiſe *. And this conſideration enhances their pleaſure; for becauſe they love him above all, they rejoice not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it poſſible there could be ſeveral methods of ſalvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would, moſt gladly and deliberately, chuſe that method which ſhould bring them under the greateſt obligations to him.

2. This triumphant ſong will be ſung to the higheſt advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed ſhall be collected together to ſing it with one heart and voice at the great reſurrection-day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was ſnatched from the impending deſtruction of Sodom. Yet his lingering † ſhewed, that he had but an imperfect ſenſe of the greatneſs of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably ſtronger afterwards, when he ſtood in ſafety upon the mountain, and actually ſaw the ſmoke riſing, like the ſmoke of a furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At preſent, we have but very faint ideas of the miſery from which we are delivered, of the happineſs reſerved in heaven for us, or of the ſufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and ſee from thence the ſmoke of that bottomleſs pit, which might juſtly have been our everlaſting abode, we ſhall then more fully underſtand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the *riches of the inheritance of the ſaints in light.* And then we ſhall ſing in more exalted ſtrains than we can at preſent even conceive of, *Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

* Pſ. cxv. 1. † Gen. xix. 16.

SERMON XLV.

Divine Support and Protection.

ROMANS viii. 31.

[*What ſhall we ſay then to theſe things?*] *If God be for us, who can be againſt us?*

THE paſſions of joy or grief, of admiration or gratitude, are moderate, when we are able to find words which fully deſcribe their emotions. When they riſe very high, language is too faint to expreſs them; and the perſon is either loſt in ſilence, or feels ſomething which, after his moſt laboured efforts, is too big for utterance. We may often obſerve the Apoſtle Paul under this difficulty, when attempting to excite in others ſuch ſenſations as filled his own heart, while contemplating the glories and bleſſings of the goſpel. Little verbal critics, who are not animated by his fervour, are incapable of entering into the ſpirit of his writings. They coldly examine them by the ſtrictneſs of grammatical rules, and think themſelves warranted to charge him with ſoleciſms, and improprieties of ſpeech. For it muſt be allowed, that he ſometimes departs from the uſual forms of expreſſion; invents new words, or at leaſt compounds words for his own uſe, and heaps one hyperbole upon another. But there is a beautiful energy in his manner far ſuperior to the frigid exactneſs of grammarians, though the taſte of a mere grammarian is unable to admire or reliſh it. When he is ſtating the advantage of being with Chriſt, as beyond any thing that can

can be enjoyed in the preſent life, he is not content with ſaying, as his expreſſion is rendered in our verſion, *It is far better* *. In the Greek, another word of compariſon is added, which, if our language would bear the literal tranſlation, would be, *Far more better*, or *Much more better*. And when he would deſcribe the low opinion he had of himſelf, great as his attainments were in our view, he thinks it not ſufficient to ſtyle himſelf *The leaſt of all ſaints*, but *leſs than the leaſt* †. Such phraſes do not imply that he was ignorant of the rules of good writing, but they ſtrongly intimate the fulneſs of his heart. In the courſe of the chapter before us, having taken a rapid ſurvey of the work of grace, carried on by ſucceſſive ſteps in the hearts of believers, till at length conſummated in glory; in this verſe, inſtead of ſtudying for words anſwerable to his views, he ſeems to come to a full ſtop, as ſenſible that the ſtrongeſt expreſſions he could uſe would be too faint. He makes an abrupt tranſition from deſcribing to admiring. He has ſaid much, but not enough; and therefore ſums up all with, What ſhall we ſay to theſe things? Surely they who can read, with the utmoſt coolneſs and indifference, what he could not write without rapture and aſtoniſhment, do not take his words in his ſenſe. If the Apoſtle's phraſeology is now become obſolete, and ſounds uncouth in the ears of too many who would be thought Chriſtians, is there not too much reaſon to fear that they are Chriſtians only in name?

Though this ſhort lively queſtion is omitted in the muſical compoſition, I am not willing to leave it out. It ſtands well, as a ſequel to what we have lately conſidered. The ſting of death is taken away. Death itſelf is ſwallowed up in victory. Sinners, who were once burdened with guilt and expoſed to condemnation, obtain a right to ſing, *Thanks be to*

* Phil. i. 23. † Eph. iii. 8.

God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ—What shall we say to these things?

It stands well likewise, as introducing the following question. If God be for us; if his promises, his power, his wisdom, and his love, be all engaged on our behalf, who can be against us? What *shall we*, or *can we*, or *need we say* more than this? What cause can we have for fear, or our enemies for triumph, if God be for us?

We may consider;

I. What is implied in the supposition?

II. The meaning of the inference.

I. The form of the question is *hypothetical*. If the assumption be right, that God is for us; the conclusion, that none can be effectually against us, is infallibly sure. Many serious persons will allow, that if God be indeed for them, all must, and will be well in the end. But they hesitate at the *if*, and are ready to ask, How shall I know that God is for me? I would offer you a few considerations towards the determining of this point, in the first place.

Sin has made an awful breach and separation between God and mankind. *They* are alienated in their minds from *him*, and *he* is justly displeased with *them*. The intercourse and communion with God, which constitute the honour and happiness of the human nature, were no longer either afforded or desired when man rebelled against his Maker, except to the few who understood and embraced his gracious purpose of reconciliation, the first intimation of which was revealed in the promise of the *seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head**. The clear and full discovery of this reconciliation is made known to us by the gospel. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*†. God is already reconciled in his sense, that having provided and accepted a satisfaction

* Gen. iii. 15. † 2 Cor. v. 19.

faction to his law and juſtice, he can now, in a way worthy of himſelf, receive and pardon the returning ſinner. And he accompanies the word of his grace with the power of his Holy Spirit, to make ſinners willing to be reconciled to him. If we be for God, he is aſſuredly for us. If we ſeek him, he has been beforehand with us; for, in the firſt inſtance, he is always *found of thoſe who ſought him not**. If we love him, it is becauſe he firſt loved us. True believers walk with God. *But two cannot walk together*, with confidence and comfort, *unleſs they be agreed*†. This agreement is chiefly with reſpect to three particulars propoſed by the Lord God in his word, and to which the believing ſinner chearfully and thankfully accedes.

1. *In the ground of the agreement;* this is MESSIAH, the Mediator between God and man. When he entered upon his office a voice from heaven commended him to ſinners, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed*‡. And they who are enlightened to behold the glory of God in his perſon and engagement, accept him as the beloved Saviour, in whom and with whom they are well pleaſed. Without this acceptance of the Mediator there can be no agreement. Jeſus is the only door, the only way of a ſinner's acceſs to the knowledge and favour of God. This is the precious and ſure foundation which he has laid in Zion‖; and to preſume to build our hope upon any other, is to build upon a quick-ſand. In this point reaſon, in its preſent diſtempered ſtate, would lead us, if followed, directly contrary to the ſimplicity of faith. Reaſon ſuggeſts, that if we have acted wrong we muſt repent and amend, and what can we do more? But the law againſt which we have ſinned makes no proviſion for repentance. Nor is ſuch a repentance as includes a change of heart (and nothing ſhort of this deſerves the name)

* Iſ. lxv. 1. † Amos iii. 3. ‡ Matt. iii. 17. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

in our own power. *Repentance unto life* * is the gift of God; and Jesus, who is exalted *to be a Prince and a Saviour* †, bestows it upon those who acknowledge him, and implore it of him. But God will only treat with us as those who are condemned already, who have nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but misery. When we feel this to be our proper state, we are referred to Jesus, in whom God is well pleased, and for whose sake sins are pardoned, and sinners accepted and justified, without condition and without exception. And then likewise we begin to see the necessity, propriety, and sufficiency of this appointment. Herein all who are taught of God are of one mind. However they may differ in some respects, they agree in cordially *receiving Christ Jesus the Lord* ‡, as he is made of God for us, *wisdom, righteousness, and salvation.*

2. They agree with God *in the great design of the gospel,* which is to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who, being delivered from their fears and their enemies, shall serve him with an unreserved and persevering obedience ‖. A deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, a devotedness to God, and a conformity to the mind and pattern of his dear Son, are included by every true believer in the idea of salvation. He knows that he can be happy in no other way. This is a turning point. There are convictions of sin excited by a dread of punishment, which, though distressing to the conscience, leave the heart and affections unchanged. They who are thus impressed, if no farther, would be satisfied with an assurance of pardon. But *the grace of God which bringeth salvation* §, *teaches us to renounce,* to abhor *all ungodliness in the present world;* to give ourselves unto him *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and to walk worthy of God, who calls us to his kingdom and glory* ¶. *This is the will*

* Acts xi. 18. † Ibid. v. 31. ‡ Col. ii. 6.
‖ Luke i. 74, 75. § Tit. ii. 11, 12. ¶ 1 Thess. ii. 12.

will of God; even our sanctification. And this is the desire of his people, that they may be sanctified wholly; that their whole persons, spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless; that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ; that they may walk as the sons of God, without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world *. Though their attainments are imperfect, in their judgment and desires they are fully agreed with God as to their aim and design.

3. They are agreed with him likewise as to the ultimate *great end, the final cause of their redemption*, which is *the praise of the glory of his grace* †. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men may be abased, and the Lord alone may be exalted; *and that he who glorieth may glory only in the Lord* ‡. Salvation is of the Lord in every sense; the plan, the price, the power, the application, the consummation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the object of it. The praise therefore is wholly due to him, and he claims it. To this claim his people fully consent. It is the desire of their souls, that his name, which alone is excellent, may alone be extolled; and with one heart and voice they say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee be all the glory and all the praise* ||.

If we truly understand and approve these things, then we are certainly engaged for God, and of course he is for us. For he alone could either enable us to see them in their true light, or incline our hearts to embrace them. Who then can be against us?

II. We are not to understand the question, *Who can be against us?* as designed to encourage us to expect that they who have the Lord on their side will meet with no opposition; but that all opposition against them will be in vain.

* Phil. ii. 15.
† Eph. i. 6.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 31.
|| Psal. cxv. 1.

I. They whom God is for, will on that very account have many oppoſers.

1. *The men of the world.* This our Lord expreſsly teaches us to expect. *If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you* *. And his apoſtle, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you* †. Till we declare for him, the world will bear with us, but no longer: as the Gibeonites were in a ſtate of honour and friendſhip with the neighbouring cities, till they ſubmitted to Joſhua ‡; but when they obtained peace from him, they were immediately involved in war with their former friends. While Saul perſecuted the church, the world ſmiled upon him, and he ſeemed to be, as we ſay, in the way of preferment. But when he yielded himſelf to the ſervice of Chriſt, and his defection from the common cauſe became generally known, bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place; and they who before had employed and careſſed him, ſought his life. I do not mean to ſound a trumpet of defiance. I believe that young converts, by their warm, but injudicious zeal, often more than is neceſſary, provoke the ſpirit of the world, and thereby increaſe their own difficulties. The goſpel, when rightly underſtood, inſpires a ſpirit of benevolence, and directs to a conduct which is ſuited to conciliate good-will and eſteem. And when the apoſtle exhorts us, *If it be poſſible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men* ‖, he gives us hope that much may be done to ſoften prejudices, to put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men, and to make them at leaſt aſhamed, by a patient perſeverance in well-doing. A conſiſtent Chriſtian, whoſe integrity, humility, and philanthropy, mark his character and adorn his profeſſion, will

* John xv. 19. † 1 John iii. 14.
‡ Joſhua x. 1,—4. ‖ Rom. xii. 18.

will in time command respect; but his attachment to unfashionable truths, and his separation from the maxims and pursuits of the many, will render him, in their eyes, singular and precise, weak and enthusiastic. If they say, "He is a good sort of man, but "has some strange peculiarities," it is the most favourable judgment he can hope for; and from some persons, and at some times, he will meet with tokens of a settled dislike. For though a religious character *may* be formed, which even *the world* will approve, yet *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution* *. They walk in the midst of observers, who watch for their halting, who lay snares for their feet, and will endeavour to bribe or intimidate them to forsake the path of duty. It is difficult to stem the torrent, or to avoid the infection of the world; and to live superior to the fear of man, as becomes us, if we know whose we are, and whom we serve. But though difficult, it is practicable and attainable, and actually attained by believers; *for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith* †.

2. *The powers of darkness.* Satan will not ordinarily trouble while he bears rule. He is indeed an enemy to his own servants, and seeks their destruction, both soul and body, by pushing them on in sin, which if persisted in, will prove their ruin; but while they make no resistance, he gives them no disturbance. It is otherwise with those whom the Lord has freed from his bondage. He will pursue them *like a lion* seeking his prey ‡, and lie in wait for them like a serpent in the path. This is one cause of the world's hatred; for the scripture styles him *the god of this world* ‖, and he sets all that he can influence, tongues, and pens, and swords, against those who are on the Lord's side. Therefore the people of God may be known by two marks. Satan by himself and by

* 2 Tim. iii. 12. † 1 John v. 4. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 8. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 4

by his inſtruments fights againſt them, and they alſo fight againſt him. The former without the latter is not concluſive. A mere outward profeſſion of religion may excite oppoſition, and mere pretenders may take pleaſure in it for a time, if it does not came too cloſe. It may feed their vanity, and give them a ſort of conſequence by having ſufferings to talk of. But I would intreat my hearers ſeriouſly to examine, Is your heart really ſet againſt ſin, which is the ſtrength of Satan's kingdom? Are you againſt his will and intereſt in the world? Have you renounced his ſervice? If ſo, fear not. God is for you, and none can harm you. For,

II. No oppoſition can prevail againſt us, if God be for us. It is impoſſible to deny, or even to doubt this truth, upon the principles of reaſon: For who, or what, can injure thoſe who are under the protection of Omnipotence? And yet it is not always eaſy to maintain the perſuaſion of it in the mind, and to abide in the exerciſe of faith, when, to an eye of ſenſe, all things *ſeem* againſt us. But though we believe not, he continueth faithful, and will not forſake thoſe whom he once enables to put their truſt in him. Job was a faithful and approved ſervant of God, yet for a ſeaſon his trials were great, and his confidence was ſometimes ſhaken. But he was ſupported, and at length delivered. There are many inſtances recorded in ſcripture to confirm our faith, and to teach us, that God manifeſts himſelf to be for his people, and in different ways renders them ſuperior to all their difficulties and enemies.

At one time he prevents the threatened danger. They only ſee it or expect it, for he is better to them than their apprehenſions and fears. Thus, when Sennacherib was furious againſt Jeruſalem, and ſuppoſed he could eaſily prevail, he was not ſuffered to come near it *. When he thought to deſtroy it, he felt

* Iſ. xxxvii. 29. 33.

a hook and a bridle which he could not reſiſt, and was compelled to retire diſappointed and aſhamed.

At another time the enemies go a ſtep farther. His people are brought into trouble, but God is with them, and they eſcape unhurt. So Daniel, though he was caſt into the den of lions*, received no more harm from them, than if he had been among a flock of ſheep. He permitted three of his ſervants to be thrown into a furnace of fire, but he reſtrained the violence of the flames, ſo that not even a hair of their heads was ſinged †.

The moſt that oppoſers can do is to kill the body ‡. If God permits his people to be thus treated, ſtill they are not forſaken. Their death is precious in his ſight ‖. They who die in the Lord are bleſſed. They are highly honoured who are called and enabled to die for him. If he is pleaſed to comfort them with his preſence, and then to take them home to himſelf, they can deſire no more. Stephen, though apparently given up to the power of his adverſaries, and cruelly ſtoned to death, was no leſs happy than thoſe who die in compoſure upon their beds, with their friends around them. Nor was he leſs compoſed: for the heavens were opened to him, and he ſaw his Saviour in glory, approving his fidelity, and ready to receive his ſpirit §.

In brief, whatever men or devils may attempt againſt us, there are three things which, if we are true believers, they cannot do. They may be helpful to wean us from the world; they may add earneſtneſs to our prayers; they may preſs us to greater watchfulneſs and dependence; they may afford fair occaſions of evidencing our ſincerity, the goodneſs of our cauſe, and the power of that God who is for us.—Such are the benefits that the Lord teaches his people to derive from their ſufferings, for he will not let

* Dan. vi. 23. † Dan. iii. 27. ‡ Luke xii. 4.
‖ Pſal. cxvi. 15. § Acts vii. 56.—60.

let them ſuffer or be oppreſſed in vain. But no enemy can deprive us of the love with which God favours us, or the grace which he has given us, or the glory which he has prepared for us. *Now, what ſhall we ſay to theſe things?*

Alas, there are too many who ſay, at leaſt in their hearts, (for their conduct bewrays their ſecret thoughts), we care but little about them. If they were to ſpeak out, they might adopt the language of the rebellious Jews to the prophet, *As to the words which thou haſt ſpoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth* *. And there are others who plainly ſay, Let us then continue in ſin that grace may abound. They do not ſo expreſsly reject the goſpel as take encouragement from it to go on in their wickedneſs. The caſe of the former is very dangerous, that of the latter is ſtill worſe. But grace, though long ſlighted, though often abuſed, is once more proclaimed in your hearing. The Lord forbid that you ſhould periſh with the ſound of ſalvation in your ears!

At preſent, and while you perſiſt in your impenitence and unbelief, I may reverſe the words of my text. Oh, conſider I beſeech you, before it be too late, *If God be againſt you, who can be for you?* Will your companions comfort you in a dying hour? Will your riches profit you in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of your ſinful pleaſures give you confidence to ſtand before this great and glorious Lord God, when you ſhall be ſummoned to appear at his tribunal? May you be timely wiſe, and *flee for refuge to the hope ſet before you!*

* Jer. xliv. 16, 17.

SER-

SERMON XLVI.

Accuſers challenged.

ROMANS viii. 33.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth.

THOUGH the collating of manuſcripts and various readings, has undoubtedly been of uſe in rectifying ſome miſtakes which, through the inadvertency of tranſcribers, had crept into different copies of the New Teſtament; yet ſuch ſuppoſed corrections of the text ought to be admitted with caution, and not unleſs ſupported by ſtrong reaſons and good authorities. The whole ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God; and they who thankfully receive it as *his book*, will not trifle with it by ſubſtituting bold conjectural alterations, which, though *they* may deem to be amendments, may poſſibly diſguiſe or alter the genuine ſenſe of the paſſage. Some fancied emendations might be pointed out, ſuggeſted by very learned men, which do not ſeem to afford ſo ſtrong a proof of the ſound judgment of the propoſers, as of their vanity and raſhneſs. Let the learned men be as ingenious as they pleaſe in correcting and amending the text of Horace or Virgil, for it is of little importance to us whether their criticiſms be well founded or not, but let them treat the pages of divine revelation with reverence.

But the pointing of the New Teſtament, though it has a conſiderable influence upon the ſenſe, is of inferior authority. It is a human invention, very helpful,

ful, and for the moſt part, I ſuppoſe, well executed. But in ſome places it may admit of real amendment. The moſt ancient manuſcripts are without points, and ſome of them are even without a diſtinction of the words. With the pointing, therefore, we may take more liberty than with the text; though even this liberty ſhould be uſed ſoberly. A change in the pointing of this verſe and the following, will not alter the received ſenſe, but, as ſome critics judge, will make it more ſtriking and emphatical. If two clauſes ſhould be read with an interrogation inſtead of a period, the apoſtle's triumphant challenge may be expreſſed in the following brief paraphraſe.

Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God himſelf? So far from it, it is he *who juſtifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Shall Chriſt?* Nay, he loves them, and accepts them. *Shall he who died for them, yea, rather who is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God,* on their behalf, *who alſo maketh interceſſion for them?* There is not the leaſt ground to fear, that *he* who has promiſed to juſtify them will lay any thing to their charge; or that *he* will condemn them, who died to deliver them from condemnation, nor can any charge of their enemies prevail to the condemnation of thoſe whom God is pleaſed to juſtify, and for whom Chriſt died, and now intercedes before the throne.

The death, the reſurrection, and aſcenſion of MESSIAH, we have already conſidered. I ſhall ſpeak only to two points from this verſe.

I. The title here given to believers, *God's elect.*

II. Their great privilege, they are juſtified, *It is God who juſtifieth* them.

I. the perſons who will be finally juſtified by God are here ſtyled his *elect.* Very near and ſtrong is the connection between peace and truth. Yet a miſtaken zeal for truth has produced many controverſies, which have

have hurt the peace of the people of God among themſelves; and at the ſame time have expoſed them to the ſcorn and deriſion of the world. On the other hand, a pretended or improper regard for peace has often been prejudicial to the truth. But that peace which is procured at the expence of truth, is too dearly purchaſed. Every branch of doctrine, belonging to the faith once delivered to the ſaints, is not equally plain to every believer. Some of theſe doctrines the apoſtle compares to milk, the proper and neceſſary food for babes *; others to ſtrong meat, adapted to a more advanced ſtate in the ſpiritual life, when experience is more enlarged, and the judgment more eſtabliſhed. The Lord, the great teacher, leads his children on gradually, from the plainer to the more difficult truths, as they are able to bear them. But human teachers are often too haſty; they do not attend ſufficiently to the weakneſs of young converts, but expect them to learn and receive every thing at once; they are not even content with offering ſtrong meat prematurely to babes, but force upon them the *bones* of ſubtleties, diſtinctions, and diſputations. But though a judicious miniſter will endeavour to accommodate himſelf to the ſtate of his hearers, no goſpel truth is to be tamely and voluntarily ſuppreſſed from a fear of diſpleaſing men. In fact, however, the controverſies which have obtained among real Chriſtians, have not ſo much affected the truth as it lies in the ſcripture, as the different explanations, which fallible men of warm paſſions, and too full of their own ſenſe, have given of it. They who profeſſedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called *Calviniſts*; and the name is uſed by ſome perſons as a term of reproach. They would inſinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or at leaſt, that he borrowed it from Auſtin, who, according to them, was the firſt of the

* Heb. v. 13, 14.

the Fathers that held it. It is enough for me that I find it in the New Teſtament. But many things advanced upon the ſubject by later writers, I confeſs, I do not find there. If any perſons advance harſh aſſertions not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itſelf is plainly taught, both by our Lord and his apoſtles, and is of great importance, when rightly underſtood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and comfort of believers, I think it my duty to ſtate it as plainly as I can. I ſhall offer my view of it, in a ſeries of propoſitions ſo evidently founded (as I conceive) on acknowledged principles of ſcripture, that they cannot be eaſily controverted by any perſons who have a real reverence for the word of God, and any due acquaintance with their own hearts.

I. All mankind are ſinners * by nature and practice. Their lives are ſtained with tranſgreſſions, their hearts are depraved, their minds blinded, and alienated from God. So that they are not ſenſible either of their guilt or their miſery; nor ſo much as deſirous of returning to God, till he prevents them with his mercy, and begins to draw their hearts towards himſelf. Were I to prove this at large, I might tranſcribe one half of the Bible. Nay, it is fully proved by experience and obſervation. The Heathens felt and confeſſed it. My preſent ſubject does not require me to account for it, or to reaſon upon it. That it is ſo, I appeal to fact.

II. The ineſtimable gift of a Saviour, to atone for ſin, and to mediate between God and man †; that there might be a way opened for the communication of mercy to ſinners, without prejudice to the honour of the perfections and government of God—this gift was the effect of his own rich grace and love ‡, no leſs unthought of, and undeſired, than undeſerved, by fallen man.

III.

* Rom. iii 23. † John iii. 16. ‡ Rom. v. 6, 8.

III. Wherever this love of God to man is made known by the goſpel, there is encouragement, and a command given to *all men every where to repent* *. The manifeſtation of the eternal Word in the human nature, and his death upon the croſs, are ſpoken of as the higheſt diſplay of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God. Deſigned to give us, in one and the ſame tranſaction, the moſt affecting ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and the ſtrongeſt aſſurance imaginable, that there is forgiveneſs with God †.

IV. Men, while blinded by pride and prejudice, enſlaved to ſinful paſſions, and under the influence of this preſent evil world, neither can nor will receive the truth in the love of it ‡. They are prepoſſeſſed and pre-engaged. This, at leaſt, is evidently the caſe with many people in this favoured nation, who, when the goſpel is propoſed to them in the moſt unexceptionable manner, not only diſregard, but treat it with a pointed contempt and indignation ‖. Such was its reception at the beginning, and we are not to wonder, therefore, that it is ſo at this day.

V. As all mankind ſpring from one ſtock, there are not two different ſorts of men by nature; conſequently they who receive the goſpel are no better in themſelves § than they are who reject it. The Apoſtle, writing to the believers at Corinth, having enumerated a catalogue, in which he compriſes ſome of the moſt flagitious and infamous characters **, and allowed to be ſo by the common conſent of mankind, adds, *Such were ſome of you.* Surely it cannot be ſaid, that they who had degraded themſelves below the brutes, by their abominable practices, were better diſpoſed than others to receive that goſpel, which is not more diſtinguiſhed by the ſublimity

* Acts xvii. 30, 31. John vi 55. v. 40.
† Rom. iii. 24, 25.
‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4. Acts xvii. 18.
§ Eph. ii. 3.
‖ Luke iv. 28, 29.
** 1 Cor. vi. 9,—11.

ſublimity of its doctrine, than by the purity and holineſs of converſation which it enjoins!

VI. It ſeems, therefore, at leaſt highly probable, that all men univerſally, if left to themſelves, would act as the majority do to whom the word of ſalvation is ſent; that is, they would reject and deſpiſe it. And it is undeniable, that ſome, who in the day of God's power have cordially received the goſpel, did for a ſeaſon oppoſe it with no leſs pertinacity, than any of thoſe who have continued to hate and reſiſt it to the end of life. Saul of Tarſus was an eminent inſtance *. He did not merely ſlight the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; but, according to his miſtaken views, thought himſelf bound in conſcience to ſuppreſs thoſe who embraced it. He breathed out threatenings and ſlaughter, and, as he expreſſes it himſelf, *was exceedingly mad againſt them* †, and made havoc of them. His mind was filled with this bitter and inſatiable rage, at the moment when the Lord Jeſus appeared to him in his way to Damaſcus. Is it poſſible that a man thus diſpoſed ſhould ſuddenly become a preacher of the faith which he had long laboured to deſtroy, if his heart and views had not been changed by a ſupernatural agency? Or that the like prejudices in other perſons can be removed in any other manner?

VII. If all men had heard the goſpel in vain, *then Chriſt would have died in vain.* But this is prevented by the covenanted office and influence of the Holy Spirit ‡, who accompanies the word with his energy, and makes it the power of God to the ſalvation of thoſe who believe. He prepares the minds of ſinners, and, as in the caſe of Lydia ‖, *opens their hearts to underſtand and receive the truth, in the love of it.*

VIII. But who will preſume to ſay, that when God was pleaſed to make a propoſal of mercy to a race

* Acts ix. 1. † Acts xxvi. 11. ‡ John xvi. 8.
‖ Acts xvi. 14.

race of rebels, he was likewiſe bound to overcome the obſtinacy of men in every caſe, and to compel them to accept it by an act of his invincible power? If he does thus interpoſe in favour of ſome, it is an act of free mercy to which they have no claim. For if we had a claim, the benefit would be an act of *juſtice*, rather than of *mercy*. May not the great Sovereign of the world *do what he will with his own* *? And nothing is more peculiarly and eminently his own than his mercy. Yes, we are aſſured, that *he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy* †, and whom he will, he may juſtly leave to be hardened in their impenitence and unbelief. We have all deſerved to be ſo left; but he, as the potter over the clay, has power and right to make a difference, as it ſeemeth good in his ſight. And *who will ſay unto him, What doeſt thou* ‡?

IX. When ſinners are effectually called by the goſpel, then they are viſibly choſen out of the world ‖, in the ſpirit and tempers of which they before lived, diſobedient and deceived, even as others. *Old things paſs away, and all things become new* §. Their hopes and fears, their companions and pleaſures, their purſuits and aims, are all changed. The change in theſe reſpects is ſo evident, that they are ſoon noticed and marked, pitied or derided, by thoſe from whom they are now ſeparated. And I think they who really experience this change will willingly aſcribe it to the grace of God.

X. But if they are thus choſen in *time*, it follows of courſe that they were choſen from *everlaſting*. Both theſe expreſſions, when applied to this ſubject, amount to the ſame thing; and the ſeeming difference between them is chiefly owing to our weakneſs and ignorance. To the infinite and eternal God our little diſtinctions of paſt, preſent, and future, are

* Matt. xx. 15. † Rom. ix. 18. ‡ Job ix. 12.
‖ John xv. 19. § 2 Cor. v. 17.

are nothing. We think unworthily of the unchangeable Jehovah, and liken him too much to ourſelves, if we ſuppoſe that he can form a new purpoſe. If it be his pleaſure to convert a ſinner today, he had the ſame gracious deſign in favour of that ſinner yeſterday, at the day of his birth, a thouſand years before he was born, and a thouſand ages (to ſpeak according to our poor conceptions) before the world began. For that mode of duration which we call *time*, has no reſpect to him *who inhabiteth eternity* *.

With regard to thoſe who reject the declaration of the mercy of God, who, though called and invited by the goſpel, and often touched by the power of his Holy Spirit, will not come to the Saviour for life, but perſiſt in their determination to go on in their ſins, their ruin is not only unavoidable, but juſt in the higheſt degree. And though, like the wicked ſervant in the parable †, they cavil againſt the Lord, their mouths will be ſtopped ‡, when he ſhall at length appear to plead with them face to face. Then their cobweb excuſes will fail them, and the proper ground of their condemnation will be, that when he ſent them light, they turned from it, *and choſe darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil* ‖.

II. The great privilege of the elect, comprehenſive of every bleſſing, is, that *they are juſtified*, finally and authoritatively juſtified, from all that can poſſibly be laid to their charge; for it is God himſelf who juſtifieth them.

The juſtification of a ſinner before God, by faith in the obedience and atonement of Chriſt, is conſidered by many perſons, in theſe days of refinement, in no better light than as a branch of a ſcholaſtic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obſolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning poin

* Iſa. lvii. 15. † Matt. xxv. 24. ‡ Rom. iii. 19. ‖ John iii. 19

point between the Proteſtants and Papiſts. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flouriſhing or a falling church; that is, he judged the church would always be in a thriving or a declining ſtate, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to. How important it appeared to our Engliſh reformers, many of whom ſealed their teſtimony to it with their blood, may be known by the writings of Cranmer, Latimer, Philpot, and others; and by the Articles of the Church of England, which are ſtill of ſo much authority by law, that no perſon can be admitted into holy orders amongſt us, till he has declared and ſubſcribed his aſſent to them. But I hope never to preach a doctrine to my hearers which needs the names and authority of men, however reſpectable, for its ſupport. *Search the ſcriptures* *, and judge by them of the importance of this doctrine. Judge of it by the text now before us. The apoſtle ſpeaks of it as ſufficient to ſilence every charge, to free from all condemnation, and inſeparably connected with eternal life; for *thoſe whom God juſtifies he will alſo glorify* †. Though volumes have been written upon the ſubject, I think it may be explained in few words. Every one muſt give an account of himſelf to God; and the judgment will proceed according to the tenor of his holy word. *By the law no fleſh can be juſtified, for all have ſinned* ‡: But they who believe the goſpel will be *juſtified from all things* ‖, for which the law would otherwiſe condemn them; and as *they who believe not are condemned already* §, ſo believers are already *juſtified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* **, in the preſent life. They plead guilty to the charge of the law; but they can likewiſe plead, that they renounce all hope and righteouſneſs in themſelves, and upon the warrant of the word of promiſe put their

* John v. 39. † Rom. viii. 30. ‡ Rom. iii. 19, 20.
‖ Acts xiii. 39. § John iii. 18. ** Rom. v. 1.

whole truſt in Jeſus, as *the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth* *: And this plea is accepted. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs* †, and his ſins are no more remembered againſt him ‡.

This juſtification, in its own nature, is authoritative, complete, and final. It is an act of God's mercy, which, becauſe founded upon the mediation of Jeſus, may, with no leſs truth, be ſtyled an act of his juſtice, whereby the believing ſinner is delivered from the curſe of the law, from the guilt and power of ſin, and is *tranſlated into the kingdom of his dear Son* ‖. It includes the pardon of all ſin, and admiſſion to the ſtate of a child of God.—It is a *paſſing from death unto life* §. By faith of the operation of God, the ſinner, once afar off, is brought nigh, is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes one with him, as the branch is united to the vine, and the members with the head **. The ſanctification of a believer is imperfect and gradual; but his juſtification, in this ſenſe, from the moment when he begins to live a life of faith in the Son of God, is perfect, and incapable of increaſe. The principle of life in a new-born infant, and the privileges dependent upon his birth, (if he be the heir of a great family), are the ſame from the firſt hour, as at any future time. He is ſtronger as he grows up to the ſtature of a man, but is not more alive; he grows up likewiſe more into the knowledge and enjoyment of his privileges, but his right to them admits of no augmentation; for he derives it, not from his years, or his ſtature, or his powers, but from the relation in which he ſtands as a child to his father. Thus it is with thoſe who are born from above; they are immediately the children and heirs of God, though for

* Rom. x. 4. † Rom. iv. 4. ‡ Heb. viii 12.
‖ Col. i. 13. § John v. 24. ** John xv. 15.

for a time, like minors while under age, they may ſeem to *differ but little from ſervants* *; and it doth not yet appear what they ſhall be.

But though juſtification in the ſight of God be connected with the *reality* of faith, the comfortable perception of it in our own conſciences is proportionable to the *degree* of faith. In young converts, therefore, it is uſually weak. They are well ſatisfied that Jeſus is the only Saviour, and they have no doubt of his ability and ſufficiency in that character, in favour of thoſe who put their truſt in him; but they are ſuſpicious and jealous of themſelves; they are apprehenſive of ſomething ſingular in their own caſe, which may juſtly exclude them from his mercy, or they fear that they do not believe aright. But the weakeſt believer is a child of God; and true faith, though at firſt like a grain of muſtard-ſeed, is intereſted in all the promiſes of the goſpel. If it be true, it will grow †, it will attain to a more ſimple dependence upon its great object, and will work its way through a thouſand doubts and fears, (which, for a ſeaſon, are not without their uſe), till at length the weak Chriſtian becomes ſtrong in faith, *ſtrong in the Lord*, and is enabled to ſay, *I know whom I have believed* ‡! Who ſhall lay any thing to my charge? Who ſhall condemn? It is God who juſtifieth. It is Chriſt who died for me and roſe again.

But eſpecially at the great day, the Lord the Judge ſhall ratify their juſtification publicly before aſſembled worlds. Then *every tongue that riſeth in judgment againſt them* ‖ ſhall be put to ſilence. Then Satan will be utterly confounded, and many who deſpiſed them on earth will be aſtoniſhed, and ſay—*Theſe are they whoſe lives we accounted madneſs, and their end to be without honour! How are they numbered among the children of God* §!

* Gal. iv. 1, 2. † Mark iv 26. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.
‖ Iſ. liv. 17. § Wiſdom v, 4, 5.

The right knowledge of this doctrine is a source of abiding joy; it likewise animates love, zeal, gratitude, and all the noblest powers of the soul, and produces a habit of cheerful and successful obedience to the whole will of God. But it may be, and too often is, misunderstood and abused. If you receive it by divine teaching, it will fill you *with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God* *. But if you learn it only from men and books, if you are content with the notion of it in your head, instead of the powerful experience of it in your heart, it will have a contrary effect. Such a lifeless form, even of the truth itself, will probably make you heady and high-minded, censorious of others, trifling in your spirit, and unsettled in your conduct. Oh! be afraid of resembling the foolish virgins †, of having the lamp of your profession expire in darkness for want of the oil of grace; lest, when the Bridegroom cometh, you should find the door shut against you.

* Phil. i. 11. † Matt. xxv. 1,—12.

SER-

SERMON XLVII.

The Interceſſion of Chriſt.

ROMANS viii. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.

THE redemption of the ſoul is precious. *Fools make a mock of ſin* *. But *they* will not think lightly of it who duly conſider the majeſty, authority, and goodneſs of him againſt whom it is committed; and who are taught by what God actually *has done*, what ſin rendered neceſſary *to be done*, before a ſinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveneſs. For wiſdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of God would have been in vain †, if the great deſign in favour of ſinful men could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind from the beginning; ſo the great work he has accompliſhed, and the characters he ſuſtains, when made known to the conſcience, are, in fact, ſufficient to relieve in every caſe, to anſwer every charge, and to ſatisfy the believer in Jeſus that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have obſerved) ready to accuſe, but it is in vain; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who ſhall dare to condemn, if things be as the Apoſtle ſtates them in this paſſage? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, muſt prove

* Prov. xvi. 9. † Gal. ii. 21.

prove (if he can), that Chriſt did not die; or that he did not riſe from the dead; or that he was not admitted into the preſence of God on our behalf; or that he is unmindful of his promiſe, to make interceſſion for all who come unto God by him. For if theſe points are indubitable and ſure, it is impoſſible that the ſoul which has truſted in Jeſus, and put its cauſe into his hands, can miſcarry.

The death and reſurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with glory, ſeated on the right hand of the Majeſty on high, as the High Prieſt of our profeſſion, can ſcarcely be conſidered too often. Theſe old truths are always new to thoſe who love him, and are the food by which their ſouls live. Yet I ſhall not at preſent repeat what I have offered upon them from former paſſages, but ſhall chiefly confine myſelf to the ſubject of his interceſſion, which has not, until now, expreſsly occurred to our meditations.

The word the Apoſtle uſes here, and in *Heb.* vii. 25.—*ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion*, occurs likewiſe *Acts* xxv. 24. where Feſtus ſpeaks of the proceſs managed by the Jews againſt Paul; and alſo *Rom.* xi. 2. of Elijah's making interceſſion to God againſt Iſrael. From theſe paſſages compared together, we may obſerve that the word is to be taken in a large ſenſe. He pleads our cauſe, he manages our concerns, he anſwers our enemies. Who then ſhall condemn thoſe for whom the Lord Jeſus thus employs his power and his love? He is our advocate *. He takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a Prieſt and manages as a King for thoſe who come unto God by him.

I. *He pleads as a Prieſt.* His office of interceſſion has a plain reference to his great inſtituted type, the high prieſt under the Levitical diſpenſation; who,

* 1 John ii. 1.

who, according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to preſent the blood of the ſacrifice before the mercy-ſeat *. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the deſign of this inſtitution. *Now when theſe things were thus ordained, the prieſts went always into the firſt tabernacle, accompliſhing the ſervice of God. But into the ſecond went the high prieſt alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himſelf and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghoſt this ſignifying, that the way into the holieſt of all was not yet made manifeſt, while the firſt tabernacle was yet ſtanding. Which was a figure for the time then preſent, in which were offered both gifts and ſacrifices, that could not make him that did the ſervice perfect, as pertaining to the conſcience; which ſtood only in meats and drinks, and divers waſhings, and carnal ordinances, impoſed on them until the time of reformation. But Chriſt being come an High Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to ſay, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered* once *into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us* †, &c. Thus Jeſus is *paſſed into the heavens*, entered into the holy of holies with his own blood. His preſence there, in our nature, with the marks of his ſufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been ſlain, is an unceaſing virtual interceſſion on our behalf. I meddle not with curious queſtions on this ſubject, as to the manner in which his interceſſion is carried on: It is ſufficient to know that he is *there*, and *there for us*, as our repreſentative. This conſideration is of continual uſe, to animate and encourage ſinners in their approach to God. There are three caſes particularly, in which the heart that knows its own bitterneſs muſt ſink, were it not for the relieving thought, That there is an *advocate with*

* Lev. xvi. † Heb. ix. 6.—12.

the Father, a *High Prieſt*, who, by his interceſſion, is *able to ſave to the uttermoſt.*

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the diſtreſs of an awakened conſcience. The ſinner now is ſenſible of wants which God alone can ſupply, and of miſeries from which he cannot be extricated but by an Almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majeſty and holineſs of God, he is troubled, and adopts the language of the prophet, *Wo is me, I am undone* *. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep any longer at a diſtance from him. But when ſuch a one is enabled to look to Jeſus as the interceſſor, what light and comfort does he receive? For the goſpel ſpeaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy laden ſinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your heart to him, and think you hear him in effect ſaying, "Father, there "is another ſinner who has heard of my name, and "deſires to truſt in me. Father, I will, that he "alſo may be delivered from going down into the "pit, and intereſted in the ranſom which I have "provided."

2. When we are deeply conſcious of our defects in duty. If we compare our beſt performances with the demands of the law, the majeſty of God, and the unſpeakable obligations we are under; if we conſider our innumerable ſins of omiſſion, and that the little we can do is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of ſelfiſh principles, aims, and motives, which, though we diſapprove, we are unable to ſuppreſs, we have great reaſon to confeſs, *To us belong ſhame and confuſion of face* †. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jeſus, the High Prieſt, bears the iniquity of our holy things,

* Iſa. vi. 5. † Dan. ix. 7.

things, perfumes our prayers with the incenſe of his mediation, and waſhes our tears in his own blood. This inſpires a confidence, that though we are unworthy of the leaſt of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a ſhare in the greateſt bleſſings he beſtows, becauſe we are heard and accepted, not on the account of our own prayers and ſervices, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh interceſſion for us. Thus the wiſdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, ſo far as it is rightly underſtood, and cordially embraced, while it lays the ſinner low as the duſt in point of humiliation and ſelf-abaſement, fills him at the ſame time with a hope full of glory, which, with reſpect to its foundation, cannot be ſhaken; and with reſpect to its object, can be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than all the fulneſs of God. There are favoured ſeaſons in which the believer, having a lively impreſſion of the authority and love of the Interceſſor, can addreſs the great Jehovah as his Father, with no leſs confidence than if he was holy and ſpotleſs as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cauſe to ſay, *Behold I am vile! I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes* *!

3. This powerful and prevalent interceſſion abundantly compenſates for the poverty and narrowneſs of our prayers. Experience confirms what the ſcripture declares of our inſufficiency to order our own cauſe before the Lord, to ſpecify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with ſuch arguments, as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections of our hearts. *We know not how to pray as we ought* †. And though the Holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often miſtake and aſk amiſs; we often forget what we ought to aſk, and we are too often cold, negligent, weary, diſtracted, and formal in prayer.

* Job xl. 4. xlii. 6. † Rom. viii. 26.

How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's preſence, as the thoughtleſs *horſe ruſhes into the battle* *! to ſpeak to God as if we were only ſpeaking into the air, and to have our thoughts diſſipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us, that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can aſk or think; but that he actually does ſo, for ſuch unworthy creatures, is owing to our Interceſſor. *He* knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. *He* is not negligent, though *we* too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's ſafety †, before Peter himſelf was aware of his danger. Have we not ſometimes been as it were ſurpriſed and ſhamed by the Lord's goodneſs, when he has condeſcended to beſtow ſpecial and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of aſking for them? Theſe are affecting proofs of our Interceſſor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But,

II. Jeſus the High Prieſt is upon a throne. He is a King, *King of ſaints, and King of nations.* He is not only a righteous advocate, but he poſſeſſes all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, *effectually to manage for thoſe in whoſe behalf he interceds.* I have already obſerved, that the original word includes this ſenſe.

1. He is the ſource and fountain of their ſupplies. All their ſprings are in him. The fulneſs of wiſdom, grace, and conſolation, out of which they are invited to receive, reſides in him. And therefore he ſays, *If ye aſk any thing in my name, I will do it* ‡. Not merely I will preſent your petitions, but I will fulfil them myſelf. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he *with whom we have to do* ‖. He therefore enjoins us, If we believe or truſt in God, to *believe alſo in him* §. His invitations, *If any man thirſt*,

* Jer. viii. 6. † Luke xxii. 31, 32. ‡ John xiv. 14.
‖ Heb. iv. 13. § John xiv. 1.

thirſt, let him come unto me and drink *; *Whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* †; equally expreſs his ſovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him wait from age to age, and are not diſappointed. *He opens his hand, and ſatisfies them with good* ‡. Nor is the ſtore of his bounty diminiſhed by all that he has diſtributed, for it is unſearchable and inexhauſtible; like the light of the ſun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done ſo from the beginning, and will continue to do ſo to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjuſts their various diſpenſations, with an unerring ſuitableneſs to their ſeveral ſtates, capacities, and circumſtances. If a ſkilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the ſame plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual ſunſhine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulneſs. In his kingdom of Providence, he ſo proportions the rain and the ſunſhine to each other, that the corn is uſually brought forward from the ſeed to the blade, the ear, and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always ſo, were it not for the prevalence of ſin, which ſometimes makes *the heavens over our head braſs, the earth under our feet iron* ‖, and turns a fruitful land into barrenneſs. So, in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exerciſes. He delights in their proſperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions in their preſent ſtate are neceſſary, and his bleſſing makes them ſalutary. But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their croſſes are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard,

* John vii. 37. † Rev. xxi. 17. ‡ Pſ. cxlv. 15.
‖ Deut. xxviii. 23.

their ſun and ſhield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none that are unnoticed by him, none that can ſeparate them from his love, and they all concur in leading them on to a ſtate of unchangeable and endleſs joy *.

3. He is *the Captain of their ſalvation* †. They are his ſoldiers, and fight under his eye; yet the battle is not theirs, but his. Iſrael of old were to muſter their forces, to range themſelves for the fight, to uſe every precaution and endeavour, as though ſucceſs depended entirely upon themſelves. Yet they obtained not the victory by their own ſword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and *they* had little more to do than to purſue the vanquiſhed, and to divide the ſpoil. And thus it is in the warfare which true Chriſtians maintain, *not againſt fleſh and blood only, but againſt principalities and powers* ‡; againſt the ſpirit of the world, and againſt Satan and his legions. They fight in his cauſe, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own ſtrength; but he rebukes them, and pleads the cauſe of his people. His gracious interpoſition in their favour is beautifully ſet forth, together with its effects, in the viſion which the prophet ſaw, when he was ſent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews againſt the difficulties they met with when rebuilding the temple. He *ſaw Joſhua the high prieſt*, who, in that character, repreſented the collective body of the people, *ſtanding before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan ſtanding at his right hand to reſiſt him* ‖. Such is our attire as ſinners, all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags; and ſuch are the attempts of our enemy, to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or to diſtreſs us when we appear

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. † Heb. ii. 10. ‡ Eph. vi. 12.
‖ Zech. iii. 1,—4.

appear before him. But when Joſhua could not ſpeak for himſelf, the Lord ſpake for him, claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, ſilenced his adverſary, clothed him with change of raiment, and ſet a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodneſs in providing him a table in the midſt of his enemies *; who ſaw with envy his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in ſecret, or attending his public ordinances: and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Eliſha's ſervant, to behold what is very near, though unſeen, we ſhould feel the force of the Pſalmiſt's obſervation. The powers of darkneſs ſurround us, their malice againſt us is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd towards us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could preſently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguiſh, if we were left expoſed to their aſſaults, they are under a reſtraint, and can do nothing without his permiſſion. When he is pleaſed to give quietneſs, *who then can make trouble* †? He preſerves and provides for his ſheep in the midſt of wolves!

We may cloſe this part of our ſubject with two or three reflections, which, though as to the ſubſtance of them I may have offered you before, are always ſeaſonable and ſuitable, when we are ſpeaking of the power and grace of MESSIAH.

1. How precious is this Saviour! How juſtly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of thoſe who know him! In the work of ſalvation, from the firſt ſtep to the laſt, he is all in all. If he had not died and riſen again, we muſt have died for ever. If he had not aſcended into heaven, there to appear in the preſence of God for us, we muſt have been thruſt down into the loweſt hell. If he did not plead for us,

* Pſ. xxiii. 3. † Job xxxiv. 29.

us, we could not, we durſt not offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would ſoon be too hard for us. May we therefore give him the glory due to his name, and cleave to him, and truſt in him alone.

2. How ſafe are the people of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power ſtretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promiſe upon which he himſelf has cauſed them to hope; while he retains that faithfulneſs which encouraged them to commit their ſouls to him, it is impoſſible that any weapon or ſtratagem formed againſt them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will riſe up againſt them; but God is for them, and with them, a very preſent help in trouble *. They are full of wants and fears, and in themſelves liable to many charges; but ſince Jeſus is their head, their ſecurity, their interceſſor, no needful good ſhall be with-held from them, no charge admitted againſt them, none ſhall condemn them, for it is God himſelf who juſtifies the believer in Jeſus.

3. If theſe things be ſo, how much are they to be pitied, who hear of them without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? *Oh taſte and ſee that the Lord is good* †! Should you at laſt be ſeparated from thoſe with whom you now join in public worſhip; ſhould you ſee them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourſelves be thruſt out; your preſent advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and miſery. As yet, there is room. Strive to enter while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the ſolemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they who believe in the Son of God will be juſtified. Conſider who will condemn them,

* Pſ. xlvi. 1. † Pſ. xxxiv. 8.

them, *God himſelf* *. From his inquiſition there can be no retreat; from his ſentence there can be no appeal. And conſider what the condemnation will be! A final excluſion from his favour; a never-ceaſing ſenſe of his awful diſpleaſure! A ſtate of eternal horror and deſpair, without mitigation, without the ſmalleſt ray of hope. Can you deliberately give up all claim to happineſs, and determine to ruſh *upon the thick boſſes of God's buckler* †, to defy his power, and to dare his threatenings, rather than forego the tranſitory and deluſive pleaſures of ſin? And can you do this with the goſpel ſounding in your ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, obſerve you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at laſt, after ſo many delays, ſo much perverſeneſs on your part, you will honeſtly and earneſtly ſeek him, he will be found of you. But if you perſiſt in your obſtinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and ſure.

* Pſ. l. 6. † Job xv. 26.

SER-

SERMON XLVIII.

The Song of the Redeemed.

REV. v. 9.

—Thou—haſt redeemed us to God, by thy blood, [out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.]

THE extent, variety, and order of the creation, proclaim the glory of God. He is likewiſe *Maximus in minimis*. The ſmalleſt of his works that we are capable of examining, ſuch for inſtance as the eye or the wing of a little inſect, the creature of a day, are ſtamped with an inimitable impreſſion of his wiſdom and power. Thus in his written word there is a greatneſs, conſidering it as a *whole*, and a beauty and accuracy in the ſmaller parts, analogous to what we obſerve in the viſible creation, and anſwerable to what an enlightened and humble mind may expect in a book which bears the character of a divine revelation. A ſingle verſe, a ſingle clauſe, when viewed (if I may ſo ſpeak) in the microſcope of cloſe meditation, is often found to contain a fulneſs, a world of wonders. And though a connected and comprehenſive acquaintance with the whole ſcripture be deſirable and uſeful, and is no leſs the privilege than the duty of thoſe who have capacity and time at their own diſpoſal to acquire it; yet there is a gracious accommodation to the weakneſs of ſome perſons, and the circumſtances of others. So that in many parts of ſcripture, whatever is immediately neceſſary to confirm our faith, to animate or regulate our practice, is condenſed into a ſmall compaſs, and compriſed

compriſed in a few verſes; yea, ſometimes a ſingle ſentence, when unfolded and examined, will be found to contain all the great principles of duty and comfort. Such is the ſentence which I have now read to you. In the *Meſſiah*, it is inſerted in the grand chorus taken from the 12th and 13th verſes of this chapter. And as it may lead us to a compendious recapitulation of the whole ſubject, and by the Lord's bleſſing, may prepare us to join in the following aſcription of praiſe to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; I purpoſe to conſider it in its proper connection, as a part of the leading ſong of the redeemed before the throne, in which the angels cannot ſhare; though the angels, from their love to redeemed ſinners, and from their views of the manifold wiſdom and glory of God in viſiting *ſuch* ſinners with *ſuch* a ſalvation, cheerfully take a part in the general chorus.

The redemption ſpoken of, is ſuited to the various caſes of ſinners of every nation, people, and language. And many ſinners of divers deſcriptions, and from diſtant ſituations, ſcattered abroad into all lands, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, will, by the efficacy of this redemption, be gathered together into one *. They will conſtitute one family, united in one great Head †. When they ſhall fully attain the end of their hope, and encircle the throne, day without night, rejoicing, their remembrance of what they once were, their ſenſe of the happineſs they are raiſed to, and of the great conſideration to which they owe their deliverance and their exaltation, will excite a perpetual joyful acknowledgment to this purport. They were once loſt, but could contribute nothing to their own recovery. Therefore they aſcribe all the glory to their Saviour. They ſtrike their golden harps, and ſing in ſtrains, loud as from numbers without number, ſweet as from bleſt voices,

Thou

* John xi. 52. † Eph. iii. 14, 15.

Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

But though this song, and this joy, will only be consummated in heaven, the commencement takes place upon earth. Believers, during their present state of warfare, are taught to sing it; in feebler strains indeed, but the subject of their joy, and the object of their praise, are the same which inspire the harps and songs in the world of light. May I not say, that this life is the time of their rehearsal? They are now learning their song, and advancing in meetness to join in the chorus on high, which, as death successively removes them, is continually increasing by the accession of fresh voices. All that they know, or desire to know, all that they possess or hope for, is included in this ascription.

I take the last clause of the verse into the subject. The words suggest three principal points to our consideration.

I. The benefit, *Redemption to God.*

II. The redemption-price, *By thy blood.*

III. The extent of the benefit—to a people *out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.*

I. *Thou hast redeemed us to God.* Redemption or ransom is applicable to a state of imprisonment for debt, and to a state of bondage or slavery. From these ideas taken together, we may form some estimate of the misery of our fallen state; a theme, which, if I cannot insist upon at large in every discourse, I would never wholly omit. For we can neither understand the grace, nor enjoy the comfort of the gospel, but in proportion as we have a heartfelt and abiding conviction of our wretched condition as sinners without it. They who think themselves whole know not their need of a physician *, but to the sick he is welcome.

If

* Matth. ix. 12.

If a man ſhut up in priſon for a heavy debt, which he is utterly incapable of diſcharging, ſhould obtain his liberty, in conſideration of payment made for him by another, he might be properly ſaid to be redeemed from impriſonment. This ſuppoſition will apply to our ſubject. The law and juſtice of God have demands upon us which we cannot anſwer. We are therefore ſhut up, under the law, in unbelief, helpleſs and hopeleſs, till we know and can plead the engagement of a ſurety for us. For a time, like Peter, we are ſleeping in our priſon *, regardleſs of danger. The firſt ſenſible effect of the grace of God, is to awaken us from this inſenſibility. Then we begin to feel the horrors of our dungeon, and the ſtrength of our chains, and to tremble under the apprehenſion of an impending doom. But grace proceeds to reveal the Saviour and friend of ſinners, and to encourage our application to him. In a good hour the chains fall off, the bars of iron and braſs are broken aſunder, and the priſon-doors fly open. The priſoner underſtands that all his great debt is forgiven, bleſſes his Deliverer, obtains his liberty, and departs in peace.

We are likewiſe in bondage, the ſervants, the ſlaves of a harder taſk-maſter than Pharaoh was to Iſrael. Satan, though not by right, yet by a righteous permiſſion, tyrannizes over us, till Jeſus makes us free †. The way of tranſgreſſors is hard ‡. Though the ſolicitations and commands of that enemy who worketh in the children of diſobedience ‖, are, in ſome reſpects, ſuited to our depraved inclinations, yet the conſequences are grievous. A burdened conſcience, a waſted conſtitution, a ruined fortune and character, ſwiftly and cloſely follow the habits of intemperance and lewdneſs; and they who ſeem to walk in a ſmoother path, are deceived, mortified,

* Acts xii. 6.—10.
† John viii. 34, 36.
‡ Prov. xiii. 15.
‖ Eph. ii. 2.

mortified, and disappointed daily. If persons who live openly and habitually in a course that is contrary to the rule of God's word, *speak swelling words of vanity* *, and boast of their liberty, believe them not. We are sure they carry that in their bosom which hourly contradicts their assertions. Yea, sometimes their slavery is so galling, that they attempt to escape, but in vain. They are soon retaken, and their bonds made stronger. The issue of their short-lived reformations, which they defer as long as possible, and at last set about with reluctance, usually is, that their latter end proves worse than their beginning. At most, they only exchange one sinful habit for another, sensuality for avarice, or prodigality for pride. The strong one armed will maintain his dominion, till the stronger than he interposes and says, *Loose him, and let him go, for I have found a ransom.* Then, by virtue of the redemption-price, *the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is delivered* †. Then the enslaved sinner, like the man out of whom the legion was cast, sits at the feet of Jesus, in peace, *and in his right mind* ‡. He becomes the Lord's freed-man.

For he is not only delivered from guilt and thrall, he *is redeemed to God.* He is now restored to his original state, as an obedient and dependent creature, devoted to his Creator, conformed to his will and image, and admitted to communion with him in love. These are blessings which alone can satisfy the soul, and without which it is impossible for man to be happy. While he is ignorant of his proper good, and seeks it in creatures, he is and must be wretched. Madness is in his heart, a deceived, disordered imagination turns him aside, and he feeds upon ashes, and upon the wind ‖. But by grace he is renewed to a sound judgment, his mind receives a right

* 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. † Is. xlix. 24, 25.
‡ Mark v. 15. ‖ Is. xliv. 20.

right direction, and he is *turned from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan to God* *.

II. What unſpeakably, and beyond conception, enhances the value of this deliverance, is the conſideration of the means by which it is effected. For it is not merely a deliverance, but *a redemption.* It is not an act of mere mercy, but of mercy harmonizing with juſtice. It is not an act of power only, but of unexampled and expenſive love. *Thou haſt redeemed us by thy blood!*

The ſentence denounced by the law againſt tranſgreſſors, was death. And therefore when MESSIAH became our ſurety, to ſatisfy the law for us, he muſt die. The expreſſion of *his blood*, is often uſed figuratively for his death, perhaps to remind us how he died. His was a bloody death. When he was in his agony in Gethſemane, his *ſweat was as great drops of blood, falling down to the ground* †. His blood flowed when he gave his back to the ſmiters, under the painful ſtrokes of the ſcourging he endured previous to his crucifixion. It flowed from his head, when the ſoldiers, having mocked his character of King by crowning him with thorns, by their rude blows forced the thorns into his temples. His blood ſtreamed from the wounds made by the ſpikes, which pierced his hands and his feet, when they faſtened him to the croſs. When he hung upon the croſs, his body was full of wounds, and covered with blood. And, after his death, another large wound was made in his ſide, from which iſſued blood and water. Such was the redemption-price he paid for ſinners, his blood, the blood of his heart. Without ſhedding of blood there could be no remiſſion. Nor could any blood anſwer the great deſign, but his. Not any, not all the bloody ſacrifices appointed by the law of Moſes, could take away ſin, as it reſpects the conſcience, nor afford a plea,

* Acts xxvi. 18. † Luke xxii. 44.

plea, with which a ſinner could venture to come before the high God *. But the blood of MESSIAH, in whom were united the perfections of the divine nature and the real properties of humanity, and which the apoſtle therefore ſtyles *the blood of God* †, this precious blood cleanſes from all ſin. It is exhibited as a propitiation of perpetual efficacy, *by which God declares his righteouſneſs*, no leſs than his mercy, *in forgiving iniquities* ‡, and ſhews himſelf juſt to the demands of his holineſs, and the honour of his government, when he accepts and juſtifies the ſinner who believes in Jeſus.

If theſe things were underſtood and attended to, would it be thought wonderful that this Saviour is very precious to thoſe who believe in him, and who obtain redemption by his blood? How can it poſſibly be otherwiſe? Grace like this, when known, *muſt* captivate and fix the heart! Not only to ſave, but to die, and to die for his enemies! Such coſtly love, productive of ſuch glorious conſequences, and to ſuch unworthy creatures! Surely the apoſtle's mind was filled and fired with theſe conſiderations, when authenticating an epiſtle with his own hand, he ſubjoined this emphatical cloſe, *If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be Anathema Maranatha* ‖! Do you think, my brethren, that the apoſtle took pleaſure in denouncing ſo ſevere a ſentence againſt all thoſe who did not ſee (as we ſay) with his eyes? Had he ſo little affection for ſinners, that he could thus conſign them to deſtruction by multitudes, for differing from him in what ſome perſons only deem an opinion? Rather conſider him, not as breathing out his own wiſhes, but as ſpeaking in the name and on the behalf of God. He knew it muſt be, and he declared it would be ſo. It was no pleaſure to him to ſee them determined to periſh. On the contrary, he had great grief and ſorrow of heart

* Micah vi. 6. † Acts xx. 28. ‡ Rom. iii. 25, 26. ‖ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

heart for them, even for the Jews, who had treated him with the greateſt cruelty. Even for *their* ſakes, he could have been content to be made an Anathema himſelf *, that they might be ſaved. But, upon the whole, he acquieſced in the will of God, and acknowledged it to be juſt, right, and equal, that if any man would not love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, after all that he had done and ſuffered for ſinners, he ſhould be accurſed. By this compariſon of the apoſtle's ſevere language with his compaſſionate temper, I am led to digreſs a little farther. It ſuggeſts an apology for miniſters of the goſpel in general. When we declare the terrors of the Lord, when we aſſure you that there is but one ſolid foundation for hope, and that, unleſs you love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you muſt periſh, ſome of our hearers account us bigotted, uncharitable, and bitter. But if you could ſee what paſſes in ſecret, how faithful miniſters mourn over thoſe who reject their meſſage, how their diſobedience cuts them to the heart, and abates the comfort they would otherwiſe find in your ſervice; if you could believe us when we ſay (I truſt truly) that we are ready to impart unto you, not the goſpel of God only, but our own ſouls alſo, becauſe you are dear to us †, and we long for your ſalvation; then you would think more favourably of us. But after all we cannot, we dare not, ſoften our meſſage to pleaſe men. What we find in the word of God, we muſt declare. It would be at the peril of our ſouls, to *ſpeak ſmooth things*, to *propheſy deceits* ‡ to you; and, ſo far as we preach the truth, it will be at the peril of your ſouls, if we are diſregarded.

III. The benefits of this redemption extend to a numerous people; who are ſaid to be redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation. I have, upon a former occaſion, offered you my ſentiments concerning the extent of the virtue of that blood which taketh

* Rom. ix. 3. † 1 Theſ. ii. 8. ‡ Iſ. xxx. 10.

taketh away the ſin of the world *. But the clauſe now before us invites me to make a few additional obſervations upon a ſubject which, I conceive, it much concerns us rightly to underſtand.

The redeemed of the Lord are thoſe who actually experience the power of his redemption, who are delivered from the dominion of ſin and Satan, and brought into a ſtate of liberty, peace, and holineſs. That the people of every kindred, nation, and tongue, are not redeemed in this ſenſe univerſally, is as certain as evidence of facts, and expreſs declarations of ſcripture, can make it. *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Multitudes, thus diſqualified, will be found trembling, on the left hand of the Judge, at the great day. But *a remnant will be ſaved, according to the election of grace.* For they who differ, who are redeemed to the ſervice of God, while others live and die in the love and ſervice of ſin, do not make themſelves to differ †. It becomes the potſherds of the earth to aſcribe to their Maker the glory of his ſovereignty, and to acknowledge, that, if they have a good hope, it is becauſe it pleaſed the Lord to make *them his people who once were not his people* ‡. Yet a way of conceiving of the doctrines of the divine ſovereignty, and of a perſonal election unto life, has often obtained, which ſeems to have a tendency to render the mind narrow, ſelfiſh, and partial, and to ſtraiten the exerciſe of that philanthropy which the genius and ſpirit of the goſpel powerfully inculcate. The beſt of us, perhaps, are more prone than we are aware of to aſſimilate the great God to ourſelves, and to frame our ideas of Him too much according to our own image. So that often much of a man's natural diſpoſition may be obſerved in the views he forms of the divine perfections and conduct; as, on the other hand, his conceptions of the character of God ſtrengthen and confirm him in his own tempers and habits.

* Sermon XVI. p. 180. † 1 Cor. iv. 7. ‡ Hoſ. ii. 23.

habits. There are perſons, who being perſuaded in their minds (we would hope upon ſure grounds) that they themſelves are of the elect, appear to be little concerned what may become of others. Their notions of God's ſovereignty, and his right to do what he will with his own, though often inſufficient to preſerve them from repining and impatience under the common events of human life, raiſe them above all doubts and difficulties on a ſubject which the apoſtle ſpeaks of as unſearchable and untraceable; where he acknowledges depths which he was unable to fathom *, all appears to them quite plain and eaſy; where he admires and adores, they arrogantly diſpute, and determine *ex cathedra*, and harſhly cenſure all who are not ſo eagle-ſighted as themſelves. Methinks they who know the worth of a ſoul, from its vaſt capacity for happineſs and miſery, and its immortal duration, cannot juſtly be blamed for allowing no limits to their benevolent wiſhes for the ſalvation of mankind, but the will of God, as it is plainly made known to us in his word. To this we are to ſubmit, not as of neceſſity only, but cheerfully, aſſured that his will is wiſe, holy, and good; that the Judge of all the world will do right; and to wait for the day when he will condeſcend to clear up every difficulty, and give us that ſatisfaction which, in our preſent ſtate of ignorance and weakneſs, we are incapable of receiving. Shall mortal man be more juſt, or can he be more merciful, than God? It is a falſe compaſſion, founded in a blameable diſregard of what is due to the glory of his great name, that prompts us to form a wiſh that his unerringly wiſe appointments could be otherwiſe than they are. Yet it is a comfort to think that his mercy, in which he delights, in which he is peculiarly ſaid to be rich, and which is higher than the heavens, will, in its exerciſe, far exceed the bounds which ſome fallible

* Rom. xi. 33.

mortals would peremptorily assign to it. We must not indulge conjecture and hypothesis farther than the scripture will warrant; but while we humbly depend upon this infallible light, we need not be afraid to follow it, though it should, in some particulars, lead us a little beyond the outlines of some long received, and in the main very valuable human systems of divinity.

I have repeatedly expressed my belief, that many prophecies respecting the spread and glory of the kingdom of MESSIAH upon earth have not yet received their full accomplishment, and that a time is coming when many (perhaps the greater part of mankind) of all nations, and people, and languages, shall know the joyful sound of the gospel, and walk in the light of the Redeemer's countenance. At present, I would confine myself to consider what ground the scripture affords us to hope that there are many of every nation, people, and tongue, even now, singing this song before his throne.

The Revelations vouchsafed to the beloved disciple in Patmos exhibit a succession of great events, extending (I suppose) from the apostles days to the end of time. But while only the learned can so much as attempt to ascertain from history the dates and facts to which the prophecies already fulfilled refer, or to offer probable conjectures concerning the events as yet future, (in which the most judicious commentators are far from being agreed); there are passages interspersed, which seem designed to administer consolation to plain believers, by representations suited to raise their thoughts to the state of the church triumphant. Though they are unable to explain the *particulars* of what they read, there is a glory resulting from the *whole*, which animates their hope and awakens their joy. Of this kind I think is that vision*, in which the apostle saw the servants of God,

* Rev. vii. 9. ad finem.

God, who were ſealed in their foreheads, in number a hundred and forty-four thouſand; and beſides theſe a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, ſaying, *Salvation to our God, which ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb*, &c. I confeſs myſelf unable to expound this ſublime paſſage, and to give the full or even the principal ſenſe of it with certainty. But that it has ſome reference to what is now paſſing within the vail, which hides the unſeen world from our view, I cannot doubt. I propoſe my thoughts upon it with caution and diffidence. I dare not ſpeak with that certainty which I feel myſelf warranted to uſe, when I ſet before you from ſcripture the great truths which are eſſential to a life of faith in the Son of God; yet I hope to advance nothing that is contrary to ſcripture, or to any deductions fairly and juſtly drawn from it.

Having premiſed this acknowledgment of my incompetence to decide poſitively, I venture to ſay, that by the hundred and forty-four thouſand ſealed in their foreheads, (a definite for an indefinite number, which is frequent in ſcripture-language), I underſtand thoſe, who, living to mature age, and where the goſpel is afforded, are enabled to make a public and viſible profeſſion of religion, and are marked as it were in their foreheads, and known to whom they belong, by their open and habitual ſeparation from the ſpirit and cuſtoms of the world which lieth in wickedneſs. And the exceeding great multitude, contradiſtinguiſhed from theſe, I conceive to be thoſe who are elſewhere ſtyled the Lord's *hidden ones*; and that theſe are a great multitude indeed, gathered by him, who knows them that are his, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. I may diſtribute them into the following claſſes.

1. *Infants.* I think it at leaſt highly probable, that when our Lord ſays, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven* *, he does not only intimate the neceſſity of our becoming like little children in ſimplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expreſsly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants, who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, ſo greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult believers, that, comparatively ſpeaking, his kingdom may be ſaid to conſiſt of little children. The apoſtle ſpeaks of them as not having *ſinned after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion* †, that is, with the conſent of their underſtanding and will. And when he ſays, *We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, he adds, *that every man may give an account of what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad* ‡. But children who die in their infancy have not done any thing in the body, either good or bad. It is true, they are by nature evil, and muſt, if ſaved, be the ſubjects of a ſupernatural change. And though we cannot conceive how this change is to be wrought, yet I ſuppoſe few are ſo raſh as to imagine it impoſſible that any infants can be ſaved. The ſame power that produces this change in ſome, can produce it in all; and therefore I am willing to believe, till the ſcripture forbids me, that infants, of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of ſinning after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion, who have done nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace. They are born for a better world than this; they juſt enter this ſtate of tribulation; they quickly paſs through it; *their robes are waſhed white in the blood of the Lamb*, and they are admitted, for his ſake, before the

* Matt. xix. 14. † Rom. v. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.

the throne. Should I be aſked to draw the line, to aſſign the age at which children begin to be accountable for actual ſin, it would give me no pain to confeſs my ignorance. *The Lord knoweth.*

2. *A people hidden among the moſt degenerate communities, civil or eccleſiaſtical, that bear the name of Chriſtian*, where ignorance and ſuperſtition, or errors, which, though more refined, are no leſs contrary to the goſpel, have a prevailing dominion and influence. What can be more deplorable, in the view of an enlightened and benevolent mind, than the general ſtate of the Roman and Greek churches! where the traditions, inventions, and doctrines of men, a train of pompous and burdenſome ceremonies, a dependence upon maſſes, penance, and pilgrimages, upon legends and fictitious ſaints, form the principal features of the public religion. Many nations are involved in this groſs darkneſs, but they are not wholly deſtitute of the ſcripture; ſome portions of it are interwoven with their authoriſed forms of worſhip; and we cannot with reaſon doubt but a ſucceſſion of individuals among them have been acquainted with the life and power of true godlineſs, notwithſtanding the diſadvantages and prejudices of their education. There are likewiſe amongſt Proteſtants ſchemes of doctrine, ſupported by learning and by numbers, which are not more conformable to the ſtandard of the New Teſtament than the groſſeſt errors of Popery; and yet here and there perſons may be met with, who, by the ageney of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to underſtand the ſcriptures, are made wiſer than their teachers; and who, though ſtill fettered by ſome miſtakes and prejudices, give evidence in the main, that their hopes are fixed upon the only atonement, that they are redeemed to God, and are partakers of that faith which worketh by love, purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

3. I will go one ſtep farther. The inferences that have been made by ſome perſons from the Apoſtle Peter's words, *That God is no reſpecter of perſons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him* *, are, undoubtedly, raſh and unſcriptural. They would conclude from thence, that it is of little importance what people believe, provided they are ſincere in their way; that the idolatrous heathens, even the moſt ſavage of them, whoſe devotion is cruelty, who pollute their worſhip with human blood, and live in the practice of vices diſgraceful to humanity, are in a very ſafe ſtate, becauſe they act, as it is ſuppoſed, according to their light. *But if the light which is in them be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs!* Such a lax candour as this tends to make the goſpel unneceſſary; if they who have it not are therefore excuſable, though they neither love nor fear God, and live in open violation of the law of their nature. The declaration, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* †, holds univerſally, and without a ſingle exception. But if we ſuppoſe *a heathen*, deſtitute of the means of grace, by which converſion is uſually wrought, to be brought to a ſenſe of his miſery, of the emptineſs and vanity of worldly things, to a conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a deſire of mercy; and that though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme, to this purport, *Ens entium, miſerere mei, Father and ſource of beings, have mercy upon me!* Who will prove that ſuch views and deſires can ariſe in the heart of a ſinner, without the energy of that Spirit which Jeſus is exalted to beſtow? Who will take upon him to ſay, that his blood has not ſufficient efficacy to redeem to God a ſinner who is thus

* Acts x. 34. 35. † Heb. xii. 14.

thus diſpoſed, though he has never heard of his name? Or who has a warrant to affirm, that the ſuppoſition I have made is, in the nature of things, impoſſible to be realiſed? But I ſtop—I do not often amuſe you with conjecture. And though, for want of expreſs warrant from ſcripture I dare not give the ſentiments I have now offered a ſtronger name than probable, or conjectural, I hope I do not propoſe them for your *amuſement*. They will prove to your advantage and my own, if they are helpful to guard us againſt a narrow, harſh, and dogmatical ſpirit; and if, without abating our reverend ſubmiſſion to the revealed will of God, they have a tendency to confirm our views of his goodneſs, and the power and compaſſions of the great Redeemer.

SERMON XLIX.

The Chorus of Angels.

REV. v. 12.

Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing!

IT was a good report which the queen of Sheba heard, in her own land, of the wiſdom and glory of Solomon. It leſſened her attachment to home, and prompted her to undertake a long journey to viſit this greater King, of whom ſhe had heard ſo much. She went, and ſhe was not diſappointed. Great as the expectations were which ſhe had formed from the relation made her by others, they fell ſhort of what ſhe ſaw and heard herſelf, when ſhe was admitted into his preſence. Good, likewiſe, is the report of the goſpel. It has a powerful effect upon thoſe who receive it by faith. It is abundantly ſufficient to convince them of the comparative inſignificance of all that they moſt admired and eſteemed in this world. From that hour they become ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth. They ſet out, in the way which God has preſcribed, in hopes of ſeeing him who is greater than Solomon; and the report they have heard of him is their ſubject, their ſong, and their joy, while they are on their journey, and their great ſupport, under the difficulties they meet with on the road. What then will it be to ſee him as he is? As yet, the one half is not told them. Or at leaſt they are not yet capable of conceiving the

the half, or the thouſandth part, of what they read in the ſcripture, concerning his wiſdom, his glory, and his grace. We weaken, rather than enlarge, the ſenſe of ſuch a paſſage as this, by our feeble comments. We muſt die before we can underſtand it. To the bulk of mankind, *Wait the great teacher death*, is cold, is dangerous advice. If they are not taught by the goſpel while they live, the teaching of death will be too late. Dreadful will be the condition of thoſe who cannot be convinced of their miſtakes, till repentance and amendment will be impracticable. But death will be a great teacher, indeed, to a believer; he will then know more by a glance, and in a moment, of the happineſs he is now expecting, than by all he could collect, from the enquiry and experience of a long courſe of years, in this world.

The ſcenery of this chapter, if attentively conſidered, is ſufficient to ſnatch our thoughts from the little concernments of time, and to give us ſome anticipation of the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Come, all ye that are wearied and burdened with afflictions and temptations, look up, and for a while, at leaſt, forget your ſorrows! The Lamb is upon his throne, ſurrounded by a multitude of his redeemed people, who once were afflicted and burdened like yourſelves; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes. They have a ſong peculiarly their own, and are repreſented as taking the firſt and leading part in worſhip and praiſe. The angels cannot ſing their ſong, they were not redeemed to God by his blood; but they are intereſted in the ſubject. Their higheſt views of the manifold wiſdom of God are derived from the wonders of redemption. Therefore they join in the chorus, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.* If you have a humble hope

of bearing a part in this immortal ſong, will you hang down your heads like a bulruſh, becauſe you have the honour of following your Lord through many tribulations to his kingdom?

The number of the angels is expreſſed indefinitely, ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands; myriads, and millions; to intimate to us, that, with reſpect to our capacities and conceptions, they are innumerable. Their number is known to him who *telleth the number of the ſtars, and calleth them all by their names* *, and to him only. The ſcripture intimates a diverſity of ranks and orders among them, *Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers*; but as to particulars, there is little ſaid that might gratify our curioſity. It is enough for us to know, that the higheſt of them, and that all of them worſhip him who is clothed in our nature. My text expreſsly informs us, that the object of their worſhip *is the Lamb that was ſlain*. Not that the humanity of Chriſt, which is but a creature, is, ſimply and formally, the object of their worſhip; but they worſhip him who has aſſumed the human nature into perſonal union with himſelf; *God manifeſt in the fleſh*, God in Chriſt. Though the world cenſure or deſpiſe us for *honouring the Son as we honour the Father* †, we have here a good precedent, as we have in many places of ſcripture, the warrant of an expreſs command. Whether men are pleaſed or not, we will, we *muſt*, worſhip the Lamb that was ſlain. To animate our devotion, let us thankfully conſider, Why he was ſlain, and How he was ſlain.

I. *Why he was ſlain.* The redeemed ſay, *For us. He loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood* ‡. They were ſinners and enemies: they were ſlaves to ſin and Satan; yet he loved them, and died to redeem them. It is by virtue of his blood and

* Pſ. cxlvii. 4. † John v. 23. ‡ Rev. i. 5.

and death that they are now before the throne. Nothing leſs than his death could have made them duly ſenſible of their miſery, nothing leſs could have relieved them from it. He was lifted up upon the croſs, that by the powerful magnetiſm of his dying love, he might, in the hour of his grace, draw their hearts to himſelf *. This was the deſign, this was the effect of his ſufferings. A crucified Saviour, though a ſtumbling-block to the ſelf-righteous, and fooliſhneſs to vain reaſoners, was to them the power and the wiſdom of God for ſalvation. They looked unto him, and were enlightened; they truſted in him, and were not aſhamed. By faith in his name, they obtained peace with God, they renounced the ways of ſin, they warred the good warfare, they overcame the world, and were at length made more than conquerors. For his ſake they endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame. They met with bad treatment from the world, but it was from the world that crucified him. While they were here their characters were obſcured by their own imperfections, and by the miſrepreſentations and reproaches of their enemies. But now their reproach is removed, and *they ſhine, each one like the ſun, in the kingdom of their Father* †. What an immenſe conſtellation of ſuns! This their full ſalvation was the joy ſet before him, for the ſake of which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. And now they ſee him as he is, they aſcribe all their victories and honours to him, and unite in one ſong of endleſs praiſe to the Lamb that was ſlain.

II. Their praiſes are heightened, when they conſider, *How he was ſlain.* He did not die a natural death: *He was ſlain.* Nor did he fall like a hero, by an honourable wound in the field of battle. The impreſſion which the death of the late General Wolfe made upon the public, is not yet quite forgotten.

* John xii. 32. † Matt. xiii. 43.

He conquered for us, but it coſt him his life. But he died honourably, and was lamented by his country. Not ſo the Lamb of God. He died the death of a ſlave, of a malefactor. Cruelty, malice, and contempt, combined to give his ſufferings every poſſible aggravation. And after he *was ſlain*, very few laid it to heart. The world went on as it did before, as though nothing extraordinary had happened. But on this dark ground the perfections of God were diſplayed in their fulleſt luſtre; and they are the perfections of the great Redeemer, and therefore diſtinctly aſcribed to him by the angels in the words which follow—*Power, and wiſdom, and riches, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.*

Though each of theſe words have a diſtinct ſenſe, a nicety in defining them, and ſtating their preciſe meaning, is of leſs importance than to feel the combined efficacy of them all, to impreſs our hearts with ſentiments of reverence, confidence, and love. The fulneſs of expreſſion may teach us, that every kind of excellence is the indubitable right and poſſeſſion of the Lamb that was ſlain. He is worthy to have them all attributed to him in the moſt abſolute ſenſe, and conſequently worthy of our adoration, dependence, and praiſe.

1. *Power.* It is ſpoken once, yea twice we have heard the ſame, that *power belongeth unto God**. It belongeth to him eminently and excluſively. All the power of creatures is derived from him. Such is the power of the Lamb. He ſtyles himſelf ὁ παντοκράτωρ†, the Omnipotent, the Upholder and Poſſeſſor of all things. He exerciſeth this power in the human nature‡. *He doeth what he pleaſeth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth* ‖; and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, *What doeſt thou?* He has, therefore, all-ſufficiency, and uncontroulable

* Pſ. lxii. 11. † Rev. i. 8. 11. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 18.
‖ Dan. iv. 35.

troulable authority, for the diſcharge of his office, as the Mediator and Head of his church. The divine perfections, being infinite, are not diſtinct in themſelves, though the ſcripture, in condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, authoriſes us to ſpeak of them as diſtinguiſhable. God is one. And the *Power* which can preſerve and govern the world, involves in the idea of it every other excellence, which are ſeparately mentioned in this paſſage.

2. *Wiſdom.* He is the *only wiſe God, and our Saviour* *. His knowledge is perfect, his plan is perfect. In himſelf he is eſſentially the wiſdom of God †, and he is our wiſdom ‡. It is *life eternal to know the only true God* ||, and therefore it is life eternal to *know Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.* For he is the only way, and the only door to this knowledge; no one can come unto God, or attain to any juſt conceptions of him, but in and by the Son of his love, who ſo perfectly repreſents God to us, is ſo completely the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, that whoſo hath ſeen him, *hath ſeen the Father* §. By him is opened to us the unſearchable wiſdom of the divine counſels, particularly in the great work of redemption. *No one hath ſeen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the boſom of the Father, he hath revealed him* ¶. It is by wiſdom communicated from him, that his people are made wiſe unto ſalvation. Though there are few ſcholars and philoſophers among them, and many of them are deſpiſed for their ignorance and weakneſs, yet in truth they have all a good underſtanding, for they know the Lord and his will; they know wherein their proper happineſs conſiſts, and how it is to be obtained. They are inſtructed, how to walk and to pleaſe God, how to bear afflictions with patience, and to meet death with compoſure. This wiſdom is far ſuperior to that of the ſchools. But *He* beſtows and maintains

* Jude 25. † Prov. viii. 22. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.
|| John xvii. 3. § John xiv. 9. ¶ John i. 18. John xv. 15.

maintains it. The eyes of their mind are opened, and they ſee by his light; but they have no light of their own, or in themſelves. They wait upon him for direction in every difficulty, for the ſolution of every hard queſtion which perplexes their ſpirits; and he makes the crooked ſtraight, teaches them to avoid the ſnares that are laid for them, or extricates them when entangled. Therefore in time, and to eternity, they will admire and adore his wiſdom.

3. *Riches.* All the ſtores of mercy, grace, and comfort, are in him, as light in the ſun, or water in the ocean. The apoſtle, ſpeaking *of the unſearchable riches of Chriſt* *, gives us the idea of a mine, the height, length, depth, and breadth of which cannot be inveſtigated, nor the immenſe wealth it contains exhauſted. Of this fulneſs the poor are invited to receive freely, and multitudes from age to age have been enriched, and the treaſure is ſtill undiminiſhed. None are ſent away empty; and when all have been ſupplied, it will be full as at firſt.

4. *Strength.* That energy and efficacy of his power, by which he accompliſhes his holy purpoſes. Who can conceive of this? How juſt is the Pſalmiſt's reaſoning, *He that formed the eye, ſhall not he ſee? He that planted the ear, ſhall not he hear* †? So we may ſay, How ſtrong is he from whom all created ſtrength is derived, and before whom the ſtrength of all creatures, if collected into one effort, would be as chaff before the whirlwind! The Lord of all power and might ſpeaks, and it is done; he commandeth, and it ſtandeth faſt. Though the waves of the ſtormy ſea toſs themſelves, they cannot prevail ‡; he checks them in the height of their rage, ſetting bounds to their violence which they cannot paſs, ſaying, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come and no farther, and here ſhall thy proud billows be ſtayed* ‖. With equal ſovereignty, certainty, and eaſe, he rules over moral

* Eph. iii. 8. † Pſ. xciv. 9. ‡ Pſ. xciii. 3, 4. ‖ Job xxxviii. 10, 11.

moral agents. He formed the heart of man, and he can fill it with terror or with comfort in a moment, in any aſſignable circumſtances. He can make it happy in a dungeon *, or impreſs it with diſmay and deſpair upon a throne † All hearts are thus inceſſantly under his influence. And the hedge of his promiſe and protection ſurrounds thoſe who truſt in him, as with mountains, and walls of braſs and fire, impenetrable to the aſſaults of the powers of darkneſs, unleſs ſo far as he, for wiſe and holy ends, is pleaſed to give permiſſion. With the arm of his ſtrength he *upholdeth them that are falling, and raiſeth up them that are bowed down* ‡, and is, in one and the ſame inſtant, a preſent and immediate help in trouble to all who call upon him ‖. Therefore they that abide under his ſhadow are ſafe; they paſs unhurt through floods and flames, becauſe their Redeemer is ſtrong. And when, in defiance of all their enemies, he has brought them together in his heavenly kingdom, they will, with one conſent, aſcribe unto the Lord glory and ſtrength.

5 *Honour.* He is the fountain of it. All the honour of his creatures, and of his people, is from him; as the ſun beautifies and gilds the objects he ſhines upon, which, without him, are opaque and obſcure. Becauſe his people are precious in his ſight, they are honourable. *He clothes them with the garments of ſalvation, covers them with a robe of righteouſneſs, as a bridegroom decketh himſelf with ornaments, as a bride adorneth herſelf with jewels* §. But who can ſpeak of his own inherent honour, as God-man, and Mediator! We muſt wait till we ſee him, without a cloud or vail, receiving the homage and adoration of angels and men. For as yet the one half cannot be told us! Then, however, it will be univerſally known, that he who poſſeſſes the fulneſs of wiſdom

* Acts xvi. 25. † Dan. v. 5, 6. ‡ Pſ. cxlv. 14.
‖ Pſ. xlvi. 1. § Iſ. lxi. 10.

wiſdom and power, riches and ſtrength, is worthy to receive all honour. Ah! how different will he then appear, from that humble form he once aſſumed, when, for our ſakes, he was a man of ſorrows, deſpiſed, rejected, and nailed to the ignominious croſs!

6. *Glory.* The manifeſtation of God, that by which he is known and magnified, in the view of finite intelligences; the reſult, the combined effulgence of his holineſs, grace, wiſdom, truth, and love: this is his glory, and this glory is revealed and diſplayed in Chriſt. He is glorious in his works of creation and providence, but theſe do not fully exhibit his character. But in the Lamb upon the throne his glory ſhines, full-orbed. And all in heaven, and all in earth, who behold it, take up *the ſong of Moſes and the Lamb* *, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Who is like unto thee? Glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing wonders! Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints* †!

7. *Bleſſing.* He is the author of all bleſſings, of all the happineſs and good which his people receive, and he is the deſerved object of their univerſal praiſe. The different ſenſes in which we uſe the word *bleſſing*, taken together, may expreſs that intercourſe or communion which is between the Head and the myſtical members of his body. He bleſſes them *effectually* with the light of his countenance, with liberty, grace, and peace. He bleſſes them *daily*. His mercies are renewed to them every morning. He will bleſs them *eternally*. *Bleſſed are the people who have this Lord for their God*. *They* can make him no ſuitable returns, yet in their way they bleſs him. They admire, adore, and praiſe him. They call upon all the powers of their ſouls to bleſs him. They proclaim his goodneſs, and that he is worthy to receive the aſcription of power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour,

* Exod. xv. 11. † Rev. xv. 3.

honour, and glory, and bleſſing. In proportion to their attainments in this delightful exerciſe of worſhip, love, and gratitude, they enjoy a heaven upon earth; and to ſtand before him continually, to behold his glory, to live under the unclouded beams of his favour, and to be able to bleſs and praiſe him as they ought, without wearineſs, abatement, interruption, or end, is what they mean when they ſpeak of the heaven they hope for hereafter. Such is the bleſſedneſs of thoſe who have already died in the Lord. They ſee his face, they drink of the rivers of pleaſure which are at his right hand, they caſt down their crowns before him, and ſay, Thou art worthy.—*Let us not be ſlothful* *, *but followers of them who, through faith and patience*, have finiſhed their courſe, and are entered into the joy of their Lord.

Of all this glory and honour the ſcripture declares the Lamb that was ſlain to be worthy. Wiſdom, riches, and ſtrength, are his. His power is infinite, his authority ſupreme. He is the author and giver of all good. He has life in himſelf, and he is the life of all that live; the Lord and Head of the church, and of the univerſe. Can language expreſs, or can heart conceive, a higher aſcription and acknowledgment than this? Can all this be due to a creature, to one of a derived and dependent character? Then ſurely the ſcripture would have a direct tendency to promote idolatry. Far be the thought from us! The ſcripture teaches us the knowledge of the true God, and the worſhip due to him. Therefore MESSIAH, the Lamb that was ſlain, is the true God, the proper and immediate object of the worſhip of angels and of men.

Let us therefore take up a lamentation for thoſe who ſlight the glorious Redeemer, and refuſe him the honour due to his name. Their miſtake ſhould excite, not our anger or ſcorn, but our pity and prayers.

* Heb. vi. 12.

prayers. Are there any ſuch amongſt us? Alas, my fellow-ſinners, you know not what you do! Alas, you know him not, nor do you know yourſelves. I am well aware that a thouſand arguments of mine will not perſuade you; but I can ſimply tell you what would ſoon make you at leaſt deſirous of adopting our ſentiments upon this ſubject. If he who has that power over the heart which I have been ſpeaking of, was pleaſed to give you this moment a ſenſe of the holineſs and authority of God, and of your conduct towards him as his creatures, your ſtrongeſt objections to the high honours we attribute to the Saviour would this moment fall to the ground; and you would be immediately convinced, that either Jeſus Chriſt is the true God and eternal life, or that you muſt periſh. You would no longer expect mercy, but in a way perfectly conſonant with the righteouſneſs and truth of God, declared in his word, and with the honour and purity of his moral government. This would lead you to perceive the neceſſity of an atonement, and the inſufficiency of any atonement, but that which the Lamb of God has made by the ſacrifice of himſelf *; and that the efficacy even of *his* mediation depends upon his divine character. The ſcriptural doctrines of the depravity of man, the malignity of ſin, the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, the neceſſity and efficacy of his mediation, and the inevitable, extreme, and endleſs miſery of thoſe who finally reject him, are ſo cloſely connected, that if the firſt be rightly underſtood, it will open the mind to the reception of the reſt. But till the firſt be known and felt, the importance and certainty of the others will be ſuſpected, if not openly denied

Though the doctrines I have enumerated are, in theſe ſceptical days, too generally diſputed and contradicted, I am fully confident that it is impoſſible to demonſtrate them to be falſe. Upon the loweſt ſuppoſition,

* Heb. ix. 26.

poſition, therefore, they poſſibly *may be* true; and the conſequences depending upon them, if they ſhould be found true at laſt, are ſo vaſtly momentous, that even the peradventure, the poſſibility of their truth, render them deſerving of your moſt ſerious conſideration. Trifle with yourſelves no longer. If they be truths, they are the truths of God. Upon the ſame authority ſtands the truth of that gracious promiſe, that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him. Let me entreat you to make the experiment. This is the proper point to begin with. Inſtead of indulging reaſonings and ſpeculations, humble yourſelves before the Lord, and pray for the light and influence which he has ſaid he will afford to them who are willing to be taught. Read the ſcripture with deliberation, and do not labour to fortify yourſelves againſt conviction. Break off from thoſe practices, which your own conſciences admoniſh you cannot be pleaſing to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. *Then ſhall you know, if you will ſincerely follow on to know the Lord* *. But if not, if you will, in a ſpirit of levity, preſume to decide upon points which you will not allow yourſelves ſeriouſly to examine, ſhould you at laſt periſh in your obſtinacy and unbelief, your ruin will be of yourſelves. You have been faithfully warned, and we ſhall be clear of your blood.

* Hoſ. vi. 3.

SER-

SERMON L.

The Univerſal Chorus.

REV. v. 13.

[*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I, ſaying,*] *Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

MEN have generally agreed to dignify their preſumptuous and arrogant diſquiſitions on the works and ways of God with the name of *wiſdom:* though the principles upon which they proceed, and the concluſions which they draw from them, are for the moſt part evident proofs of their depravity and folly. Inſtead of admiring the *effects* of his wiſdom and power in the creation, they have raſhly endeavoured to inveſtigate the manner of its production. A variety of hypotheſes have been invented to account for the formation of the world, and to ſtate the laws by which the frame of nature is governed; and theſe different and inconſiſtent accounts have been defended with a magiſterial tone of certainty, and an air of demonſtration, by their reſpective authors, as though they had been byſtanders and ſpectators, when God ſpoke all things into being, and produced order out of confuſion by the word of his power. They have however been much more ſucceſsful in ſhowing the abſurdity of the ſchemes propoſed by others, than in reconciling their own to the ſober dictates of plain common ſenſe.

But

But if, by indulging their ſpeculations on the creation of the world, the cauſes of the deluge, and ſimilar ſubjects, their employment has been no better than *weaving ſpiders webs;* the reſult of their reaſoning on morals has been much worſe. Here they have with much induſtry *hatched cockatrice-eggs* *; and their labours have been not only fallacious, but miſchievous. Their metaphyſical reſearches, while they refuſe the guidance of revelation, if purſued to their juſt conſequences, will always lead into the labyrinths of ſcepticiſm, weaken the ſenſe of moral obligation, rob the mind of the moſt powerful motives of right conduct, and of the only conſolations which can afford it ſolid ſupport in an hour of trouble. One inſuperable difficulty which they *will* undertake to ſolve, though it does not properly lie in their way, is concerning the origin of evil. That evil is in the world, is felt and confeſſed univerſally. The goſpel points out an effectual method of deliverance from it; but, alas, the ſimple and infallible remedy is neglected, and men weary themſelves with vain enquiries,

And find no end, in wand'ring mazes loſt.

The more they reaſon, the more they involve themſelves in uncertainty and error, till at laſt they make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as ſo many undoubted axioms, opinions, which are equally diſhonourable to God, and contradictory to truth and experience †. Thus much is certain, that by the occaſion of evil, the character of God is manifeſted with ſuperior glory to the view of angels and men, who are in a ſtate of holineſs and allegiance, and an higher accent is thereby given to their praiſes; for now his juſtice and his mercy, which could not have been otherwiſe known, are revealed in

* If. lix. 5. † 2 Theſſ. ii. 11.

in the ſtrongeſt light; and the redemption of ſinners affords the brighteſt diſplay of his wiſdom and love.

The redeemed are repreſented as taking the firſt part in this ſublime ſong, verſe 8,—10. The angels join in the chorus, verſe 11, 12. which now becomes univerſal. All the angels, all the ſaints upon the earth, in the ſtate of the dead, or *hades*, whether their bodies are buried under the earth, or in the ſea, with one heart, aim, and voice, unite in worſhip and praiſe. In the preceding verſe, *Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power*, are aſcribed unto the Lamb; but here the aſcription is *unto Him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.* I ſhall not add to what I have already obſerved to you from the words of the doxology. A few remarks, which offer from this verſe taken in connection with the former, will bring me to a concluſion of the whole ſubject. And oh! for a coal of fire from the heavenly altar to warm your hearts and mine, that our love, joy, and gratitude may be awakened into lively exerciſe, and that the cloſe of our meditations on the *Meſſiah* may leave us deeply impreſſed with deſires and well-grounded hopes of meeting ere long before the throne, to join with the angels and the redeemed in ſinging the praiſe of God and the Lamb!

I. The Lord Jeſus is not only the head of the church redeemed from among men, but of the whole intelligent creation that is in willing ſubjection to God. It belonged to his great deſign *to gather together in one**, (to reduce under one head, as the Greek expreſſion is), even in himſelf, *all things that are in heaven and upon earth.* He is the Lord and the life both of angels and of men. Mutability and dependence are eſſential to the ſtate of creatures, however exalted; and the angels in glory owe their preſervation and confirmation in holineſs and happineſs to him. Hence they are ſtyled the *elect angels,*

* Eph. i. 10.

angels *, in diſtinction from thoſe who left their firſt habitation, and ſunk into ſin and miſery. Angels therefore conſtitute a branch of that great family which is named of him in heaven and earth. And having made peace by the blood of his croſs, he has effected a reconciliation, not only between God and ſinners, but alſo between angels and men. How thoſe inhabitants of light are diſpoſed to ſinful men, conſidered as ſinful, we may learn from many paſſages of ſcripture. They are devoted to God, filled with zeal for his honour, and wait but for his command to execute vengeance upon his enemies. When Herod, infatuated by his pride, and by the flattery of the multitude, received their idolatrous compliment with complacence, *an angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory* †. The peſtilence which deſtroyed the people towards the end of David's reign, was under the direction of an angel ‡, and David ſaw him with his arm ſtretched out againſt Jeruſalem. And in this propheſy angels are ſpoken of as employed in pouring forth the vials of wrath upon the earth. And ſtill they are ready, we may believe, to avenge their Maker's cauſe upon the wicked, when they are commiſſioned. And if the hiſtory of modern times was written by an inſpired pen, and events, as in the ſcriptures, were aſſigned to their proper cauſes, perhaps the death of many a haughty worm would be recorded in words to this effect—*And an angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory.* But, viewing ſinners as the ſubjects of redemption, the angels copy from their Lord. They regard them with benevolence, and rejoice over every one that repenteth ‖. They willingly attend on them, and aſſiſt them, in ways beyond our conception. They eſteem believers in Jeſus as their fellow-ſervants § We have reaſon to think,

* 1 Tim. v. 21. † Acts xii. 23. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17.
‖ Heb. i. 14. § Rev. xxii. 9.

think, that they are preſent in our worſhipping aſſemblies; and, perhaps, always ſo preſent, that they could diſcover themſelves to us in a moment, were it conſiſtent with the rules of the divine government eſtabliſhed in this lower world, ſuited to the ſtate of thoſe who are to walk by faith, not by ſight. Thus far, however differing in other reſpects, the angels and the redeemed are united and related in one common head, and have fellowſhip in worſhip and ſervice. When ſinners are enabled by grace to renounce this world, they are admitted to an honourable alliance with a better.

II. From hence we may form ſome judgment of the true nature and high honour of that ſpiritual worſhip, which is the privilege and glory of the church of God under the goſpel-diſpenſation. When we meet in the name of Jeſus, as his people, and with a due obſervance of his inſtitutions, we come to the *innumerable company of angels, and to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born* *, the firſt born ones, (for the expreſſion is plural). We draw nigh, by faith, to the very gate of heaven, to the holieſt of all. Men unacquainted with ſpirituality, are ſoon weary even of the form of worſhip, unleſs their minds are amuſed by a ſplendid ceremonial. The firſt riſe and ſubſequent increaſe of that pomp and pageantry, which in ſome countries has quite obſcured the ſimplicity and beauty of goſpel-worſhip, is to be aſcribed to this indiſpoſition of the human mind. Our thoughts, while we are in a natural ſtate, are too weak and wavering, and too groſs to be pleaſed with a worſhip, in which there is nothing ſuited to affect the imagination by ſenſible objects. And therefore, when men think themſelves wiſe, and profeſs to deſpiſe the pageantry which captivates the vulgar, their wiſdom affords them no real advantage, if they have nothing better to ſubſtitute in

* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

in the room of what they reject as insignificant. The very appearance of devotion will languish, they will grow remiss, and neglect the sabbath and public assemblies, for want of something to keep up their attention. We have abundant proof of this in our own land, and at this time. Protestants pride themselves in not being Papists, but, when the Protestant religion is understood to mean no more than a renunciation of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome, it is, with respect to individuals, little, if at all, better than Popery itself. Among us enlightened Protestants, no expedient but preaching the gospel of Christ will be found sufficient to retain people in a stated observance of the Lord's day. But true believers, who understand and love the gospel, do indeed draw nigh to God; and they account *a day in his courts better than a thousand* *, because they can take a part in the songs of heaven, and, in spirit and in truth, worship him that *sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb who redeemed them to God by his blood.* They know by happy experience, that his promise, to be in the midst of those who assemble in his name, is truth. Their worship is not a mere bodily service, a lifeless form, a round of observances, which neither warm the heart, nor influence the conduct; but they are instructed, comforted, and strengthened, by waiting upon God. Their spiritual senses are exercised; they *behold* his glory in the glass of the gospel, they *hear* his voice, they *feel* an impression of his power and presence, they *taste* his goodness, and the virtue of that name, which is as ointment poured forth, *perfumes* their tempers and conversation.

III. Though the Lamb is worthy of all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; there is a distinct ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne.

* Ps. lxxiv. 10.

The ſcripture, which alone can teach us to form right conceptions of God, and to worſhip him acceptably, guides us in a medium, between oppoſite errors and miſtakes. Too many perſons, ignorant of their own ſtate as ſinners, and of the awful majeſty and holineſs of the Moſt High, preſume to think of him, to ſpeak of him, and, in their way, to ſpeak to him, without being aware of the neceſſity of a Mediator. But they who are without Chriſt, who is the only door and way to the Father, are without God, Atheiſts in the world *. There is a miſtake likewiſe on the other hand, when, though the Deity of the Saviour be acknowledged, yet what we are taught of the ineffable diſtinction in the Godhead, is not duly attended to. It is written, *In the beginning,—the Word was God* †. It is likewiſe written, *The Word was with God.* This latter expreſſion undoubtedly has a meaning, which, though perfectly conſiſtent, is not co-incident with the former. The truth contained in it is propoſed, not to our *curioſity* as a ſubject of ſpeculation, but to our faith. I do not attempt to explain it. But, what God expreſsly declares, we are bound, upon the principles of right reaſon, to believe. For he is Truth, and cannot deceive us. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit* ‡. Theſe three are frequently ſpoken of in the ſcripture—to each of them a diſtinct part in the œconomy of ſalvation is aſcribed; to each of them the perfections and honours of Deity are attributed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one. Conſequently theſe three are one God. This doctrine may be above our comprehenſion, but cannot be contrary to our reaſon, if it be contained in a revelation from God. If it be ſimply received, upon the authority of the Revealer, it approves itſelf to be true, for it is found to be a key to the whole ſcripture, which renders the general ſenſe and ſcope every

* Eph. ii. 12. † John i. 1. ‡ 1 John v. 7.

every where conſiſtent and plain. They who proudly reject it, and yet admit the Bible to be a divine revelation, are involved in difficulties from which all their ſagacity and learning cannot free them. In vain they labour by ſingular interpretations, by the minutiæ of criticiſm, and by an appeal to various readings and ancient verſions, which, in a few paſſages, differ from the copies more generally received —in vain they endeavour by theſe refinements, to relieve themſelves, when preſſed by the obvious and natural ſenſe of a thouſand texts, which confirm the faith and hope of plain Chriſtians. The goſpel is deſigned for the poor. But the poor and unlearned would be at a great diſadvantage, if the ſcripture could not be rightly underſtood without the aſſiſtance of ſuch learning and ſuch criticiſm as we often ſee preſſed into the ſervice. But the Holy Spirit graciouſly leads thoſe who pray for his teaching, into ſuch views of this high ſubject as are ſufficient to comfort their hearts, and to animate their obedience. The faith of thoſe who are taught of God, is exerciſed in their approaches to him, under two different modifications. Both are ſcriptural, and therefore both are ſafe, and witneſſed to by his gracious acceptance and bleſſing.

1. They come to God *by* Chriſt. They have acceſs through him *. Unworthy to ſpeak for themſelves, they bow their knees in his name †. Chriſtians are ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed and deſcribed by ſaying, *They come to God by him* ‡. They come to God, they cannot live without him in the world, as they once did. They are now conſcious of wants and deſires, which only God can ſatisfy; but they are conſcious likewiſe that they are ſinners, and therefore they durſt not approach him, if they had not the invitation of his promiſe, and an aſſurance of *an Advocate with the Father* ‖.

* Eph. ii. 18. † Phil. ii. 10.
‡ Heb. vii. 25. ‖ 1 John ii. 2.

2. They come to God *in* Christ. He is the great Temple, in whom the All-fulness dwells *; and they are not afraid of idolatry, when they worship and honour the Son even as the Father. This distinct application to God, in the person of the Son of his love, perhaps becomes more frequent and familiar as they advance in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour †. They who seek to him for deliverance from sin and misery, at first I believe chiefly consider him as the Advocate and High Priest, who, by the virtue of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. But when the Apostle distributes Christians, according to their growth in grace, into the state of babes, young men, and fathers ‡, he speaks of a more distinct and appropriate knowledge of him who is from the beginning, as the peculiar privilege and distinguishing attainment of the fathers. He speaks of him that is from the beginning, so often, that we can be at no loss to determine whom he intends by the expression. He applies it to him who was in the beginning with God ‖, and whom he and the other Apostles had heard, had seen with their eyes, and touched with their hands §. An eminent divine ** points out some special seasons in the Christian life, in which he thinks the peculiar pressures of the soul may obtain the most sensible and immediate relief, by direct application to the Saviour. But there are some believers who find themselves almost continually in one or other of the situations which he marks as occasional. However this may be, I am ready to take it for granted, that they who really and cordially believe the Deity of Christ, do at least at some seasons, and upon some occasions, expressly direct their prayers to him. If precedents be required to warrant this practice, the New Testament will furnish them in abundance.

* Col. i. 19.; ii. 9. † 2 Peter iii. 18. ‡ 1 John ii. 14.
‖ John i. 1. § 1 John i. 1,—3. ** Owen in his Christologia.

abundance. I shall select but a few. The Apostle Paul *bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus;* but he often prayed to the Lord Jesus. He prayed to *him* in the temple *, and when he obtained that answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee* †. To him the prayer of the Apostles and disciples was addressed previous to the lot, which was to determine a successor to Judas ‡. And to him Stephen committed his departing spirit ‖, an act of trust and worship of the highest kind, and at the most solemn season. In short, it is a strange inconsistence, if any, who acknowledge his Deity, question the propriety of praying to him. What is it, more or less, than to question the propriety of praying to God?

IV. This solemn worship and praise is referred ultimately to him who sitteth upon the throne,—to the great and glorious God, thus known and manifested in, and by, and with the Lamb that was slain.

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ will have a period. He will reign as Mediator, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and perfected his whole work. Then his kingdom in this sense will cease; he will deliver it up to the Father, *that God may be all in all* §. This passage is difficult, that is, the subject is too great for our faculties in their present state of imperfection fully to comprehend; for the difficulties we meet with in scripture are more properly to be ascribed to our ignorance. The Son, as man, is even now subject to the Father; and God is undoubtedly all in all, at present, and from everlasting to everlasting. But his kingdom here is to be taken figuratively for the subjects of his kingdom, his people, whom he received as a trust and a treasure. These he will deliver up, and the form of his administration and government over them will be changed. They will then have no more sins to confess;

* Acts xxii. 17.—21. † 2 Cor. xii. 9
‡ Acts i. 24. ‖ Acts vii. 59. § 1 Cor. xv. 28.

fefs; there will be no more dangers requiring the care and tenderneſs of a Shepherd, no enemies to be controlled, and the ordinances and means of grace, accommodated to their wants and weakneſs while in this world, will be no longer neceſſary. But MESSIAH, the Lamb that was ſlain, will ever be the Head and Lord of the creation, the medium of communication of the light and love of God to his people; and God in him, the object of their eternal adoration and praiſe.

Then the grand, ultimate, final cauſe of all the manifeſtations of God, will be completely obtained. The glory of the great Creator and Lawgiver, the ſplendor of all his perfections, will for ever ſhine, without a vail or cloud, and with a brightneſs which could not have been known by creatures, had not the entrance of evil given occaſion for a diſplay of his wiſdom and love, in over-ruling it to the praiſe of his glorious grace.

Thus, according to the meaſure of my ability and experience, I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning and importance of the well choſen ſeries of ſcriptural paſſages, which are ſet to muſic in the Oratorio of *the Meſſiah.* Great is the Lord MESSIAH, and greatly to be praiſed! I have attempted to ſet before you a ſketch, of what the ſcripture teaches us, concerning his perſon, undertakings, and ſucceſs; the miſery of thoſe whom he came to ſave, the happineſs to which he raiſes them, and the wonderful plan and progreſs of redeeming love. But who is ſufficient for theſe things? Alas! how ſmall a portion of his ways are we able to trace! But I would be thankful, that the deſire of attempting this great ſubject was put into my heart, and that having obtained help of God, I have been preſerved and enabled to finiſh my deſign. Imperfect as my execution of it has been, I cannot doubt that the various topics I have been led to inſiſt on are the great truths of God. For what is properly my

my own, the defects and weakneſſes which mix with my beſt ſervices, I entreat his forgiveneſs, and requeſt your candour. But I do not heſitate to ſay, that the ſubſtance of what I have advanced deſerves and demands your very ſerious attention.

It is probable, that thoſe of my hearers who admire this Oratorio, and are often preſent when it is performed, may think me harſh and ſingular in my opinion, that of all our muſical compoſitions, this is the moſt improper for a public entertainment. But while it continues to be equally acceptable, whether performed in a church or in the theatre, and while the greater part of the performers and of the audience are the ſame at both places, I can rate it no higher than as one of the many faſhionable amuſements which mark the character of this age of diſſipation. Though the ſubject be ſerious and ſolemn in the higheſt ſenſe, yea, for that very reaſon; and though the muſic is, in a ſtriking manner, adapted to the ſubject, yet, if the far greater part of the people who frequent the Oratorio, are evidently unaffected by the Redeemer's love, and uninfluenced by his commands, I am afraid it is no better than a profanation of the name and truths of God, a crucifying the Son of God afreſh. You muſt judge for yourſelves. If you think differently from me, you will act accordingly.—Yet, permit me to hope and to pray, that the next time you hear the *Meſſiah*, God may bring ſomething that you have heard in the courſe of theſe ſermons, nearly connected with the peace and welfare of your ſouls, effectually to your remembrance.

I would humbly hope, that ſome perſons, who were ſtrangers to the power and grace of MESSIAH, when I entered upon this ſervice, are now deſirous of ſeeking him with their whole hearts. Yes, I truſt I have not laboured wholly in vain. The goſpel is *the rod of his ſtrength* *, which, when accom-

 panied

* Pſal. cx 2

panied by the power of his Spirit, produces greater effects than the wonder-working rod of Moſes. It cauſes the blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live. A faithful miniſter will account a ſingle inſtance of ſucceſs a rich recompence for the labour of a life. May this joy be mine! May the Lord encourage you to go on ſeeking him. Then he will ſurely be found of you. An open door is ſet before you *; and if you are truly willing to enter, none ſhall be able to ſhut it.

But may I not fear, that I am ſtill ſpeaking to others, who, to this hour, have no cordial admiring thoughts of the great Saviour? Alas! ſhould you die in your preſent frame of mind, let me, once more, entreat you to conſider, what *your* ſituation and employment will be, when all his redeemed people, and all his holy angels, ſhall join in worſhipping and praiſing him, in the great day of his appearance.

Unleſs you repent, lay down your arms, and ſubmit to his golden ſceptre, your doom is already pronounced. Awful are the words of the Lord, by the prophet, and very applicable to your caſe, if (which may his mercy prevent!) you ſhould die in your ſins. *Therefore, thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold my ſervants ſhall eat, but ye ſhall be hungry: behold, my ſervants ſhall drink, but ye ſhall be thirſty: behold, my ſervants ſhall rejoice, but ye ſhall be aſhamed: behold, my ſervants ſhall ſing for joy of heart, but ye ſhall cry for ſorrow of heart, and ſhall howl for vexation of ſpirit* †. If the Scribes and Phariſees were filled with envy and grief when the children in the temple ſung Hoſanna to the Son of David ‡; what muſt be their anguiſh and remorſe, their rage and deſpair, when the *whole creation* ſhall join in his praiſe? If your thoughts of him now are like theirs, tremble at your danger; for unleſs you repent, your lot muſt be with them hereafter.

* Rev. iii. 8. † Iſ. lxv. 13, 14. ‡ Mat. xxi. 15.

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